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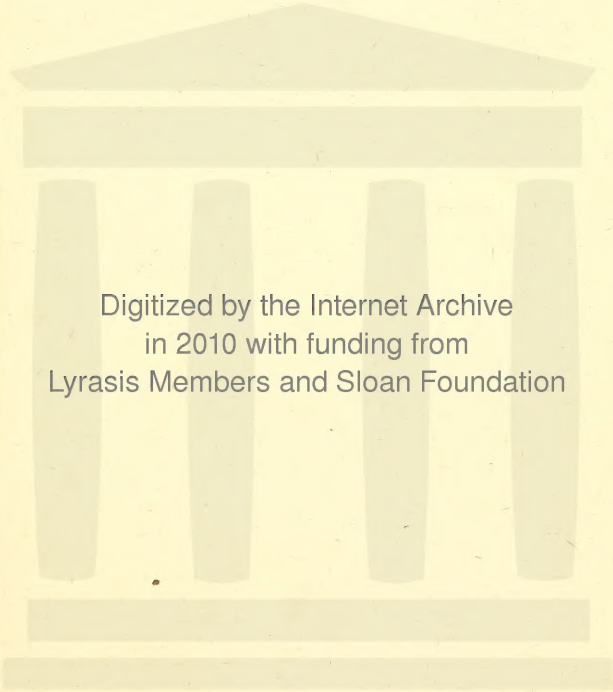

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THE

CATHOLIC PRIESTHOOD.

PART I:

THE GREAT DIGNITY OF THE PRIESTHOOD—VOCATION TO IT.

PART II:

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF THE PRIEST.

BY

REV. MICHAEL MÜLLER, C.SS.R.

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Dedication.

TO THE

CATHOLIC CLERGY OF AMERICA,

AS A PLEDGE OF REVERENCE AND LOVE,

THIS BOOK IS HUMBLY DEDICATED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

JUL 21 '32

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PREFACE.

In dedicating this work to the Catholic Clergy of America, I must frankly confess that I have not been without fear lest the subject of the work has not been treated in a manner sufficiently interesting, edifying and instructive to make it an acceptable offering to my brethren of the Clergy. Indeed, it would never have occurred to me to write a work like this, had I not been told by many priests that there are clerical critics, and they strangers to me, who think well of my publications. It is this commendation which has encouraged me to publish what I have from time to time written on the Catholic Priesthood for my own spiritual benefit, believing that what has been of great usefulness to myself, may also prove beneficial to many other priests.

I am impressed more strongly than ever with a sense of the grandeur and sublimity of the subject; for it has always been a matter of considerable difficulty to form a clear conception of the priestly dignity and duties. Perfectly conscious of my utter incompetency for the task, I could have wished that some one more competent and more experienced in writing on such a subject, had engaged in the undertaking. Hence I am ready to charge myself with presumption

for venturing on so difficult a task which has occupied the pens of the ablest theologians.

I can find for myself no excuse but in the sincerity with which I have sought to collect from all the authors at my command the most select and pithy sentences of the Fathers and theologians of the Church, in order to give brother-priests an opportunity, with little effort or expense, to become acquainted with the ideas which those great men had conceived on the subject, and thereby inflame them with greater love for their calling and the faithful compliance with the duties of their holy state of life.

Notwithstanding this sincerity of mine, I am fully aware that I am far from having done justice to a subject so difficult to handle, so vast in its extent, so sublime in its conceptions, so unspeakable in its blessings, both spiritual and temporal.

It is useless to urge in my defence any theological embarrassments under which I was laboring, since that will hardly be an excuse for not doing well what it was not necessary for me to do at all.

As to the defects of my undertaking,—which unquestionably will be many,—I hope the sincerity of a good intention and the desire of spiritually benefiting the Catholic Clergy, will be sufficient to plead my cause with indulgent and considerate brother-priests. Thus, imperfect as this new production may be, I present it to my brethren of the Clergy, confidently hoping that they will kindly accept my labors of thirty-two years as an offering which I make them to show the deep reverence and love which I have always entertained for their exalted dignity; for "it is fitting," says St. Thomas, "that an offering of the fruits of our

labors should be made to priests," and thereby contribute towards "filling the ranks of the Clergy with more and more worthy and capable men." (Leo XIII, Encycl. 8 Feb., 1884.)

Pittsburg, Feast of Corpus Christi, 1885.

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THE CATHOLIC PRIESTHOOD.

PART I.

The Great Dignity of the Priesthood—Vocation to it.

CHAPTER I.

Jesus Christ The Eternal Priest.

Jesus Christ, "Priest according to the order of Melchisedech," (Heb. vii, 3) "Yesterday, and to-day, and the same forever," (Heb. xiii, 8) "through whom it hath well pleased the Father to reconcile all things unto himself, making peace through the blood of the cross, both as to the things on earth and the things that are in heaven." (Coloss. i, 20.)

1. *Jesus Christ, Priest, yesterday.*

Many years ago a celebrated architect built a magnificent palace. When he had completed the costly edifice he gave it to some friends for their dwelling. But these soon behaved badly, and became a scandal to the whole neighborhood. People often said: "Why was so splendid a palace erected for such wicked wretches?" At last the king arrived and took possession of the palace.

He pardoned the servants and tried to make them good again. Then the people said: "Now we understand why this magnificent palace was built; it was for the king."

The architect in this parable is God the Father. He built a magnificent palace—the world. He put into it his friends—Adam and Eve. They soon behaved badly; and the angels asked: "Why was so splendid a palace —the world—created for these wicked people?"

At last the King, Jesus Christ, arrived. He pardoned the servants and tried to make them good again, and the angels exclaimed: "Now we understand why this great palace—the world—was made; it was for Jesus Christ, the King of the world.

God decreed from all eternity to create the world as a dwelling-place for men, where, by a holy life, they should gain an eternal reward. He foresaw from all eternity that men would not live up to the end of their creation. God would then have been frustrated in his design, had he not decreed from all eternity the Incarnation for the redemption of the human race. It was, therefore, principally for the sake of the God-Man that the world was created. He was to come for the justification and glorification of man. Hence St. Thomas Aquinas says: *Ordo naturæ creatus est et institutus propter ordinem gratiæ.*

The principal end of the creation of the universe is, first, Jesus Christ, and, secondly, that the elect may receive here below the grace of God through Christ. Although it is true that the world existed before the Son of God became man, nevertheless, in the plan of creation and redemption Jesus Christ is prior to the world. On this account St. Paul calls Jesus Christ the beginning, *the*

first-born from the dead, that, in all things, he may hold the primacy : because in him it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, making peace through the blood of the cross, both as to the things on earth, and the things that are in heaven. (Coloss. i, 18, 20.)

There is, therefore, a certain intimate union between the creation of the world and the nativity of Christ. God did not wish that Christ should be born except in this world; and again, he did not wish that this world should exist without Jesus Christ. Nay, it was chiefly for his sake, as we have said, that God created the world and for his sake has preserved it and shall continue to preserve it to the end of time.

God had decreed to institute through him the order of grace, that is, the order of the justification and glorification of the elect.

God revealed this great truth of salvation to our first parents immediately after the fall. He preserved the knowledge of this truth through the holy patriarchs, and prophets who, in clear language, foretold that the Redeemer would come, and "be a priest upon his throne" (Zach. vi, 13), "a priest according to the order of Melchisedech," (Ps. cix, 4) and that he himself would be the victim offered up for the sins of mankind. "I have given my body to the strikers and my cheeks to them that plucked them; I have not turned away my face from them that rebuked me, and spit upon me." (Isai. i, 6.) "I am a worm, and no man; the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people." (Ps. xxi, 7.) "There is no beauty in him, nor comeliness: despised, and the most abject of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted

with infirmity: surely he hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows, and we have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God, and afflicted." (Isai. liii.) "And they gave me gall for my food, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." (Ps. lxviii, 22.) "Many dogs have encompassed me; the council of the malignant hath besieged me; they have dug my hands and feet; they have numbered all my bones." (Ps. xxi, 17.) "He was offered because it was his own will." (Isai. liii, 7.)

From this great, fundamental truth of religion we easily understand why St. Paul wrote to the Hebrews: "Jesus Christ yesterday, and to-day, and the same forever." (Heb. xiii, 8.) The great apostle means to say: O Hebrews, Jesus Christ, the God-Man and High Priest, was *yesterday*, that is, he was in the time before you from the beginning. Jesus was the victim and priest before the Law, not in person, but in figure. He was the victim in figure in the lamb and other animals which priests and patriarchs offered in sacrifice. The faithful worshippers saw Christ in those sacrifices either explicitly or implicitly; and they believed in him. They believed that he would come and redeem the world. By this spiritual knowledge they guided their lives. Thus their sins were forgiven both as to their guilt and their punishment. The sacrifice of Abel was acceptable to God, because in the lamb which he sacrificed, he saw not merely the lamb, but also a better victim—that is, the Saviour, and he believed in him, and therefore God had regard to Abel and his offering.

Jesus Christ was also the priest under the Mosaic law. A priest, as the word has been understood from the beginning by all nations, Christians, Jews, and even pagans,

is a mysterious, sacred, inviolable being, divine rather than human, separated from the rest of mankind by the sublime character of his functions, called from on high, consecrated by a heavenly anointing, offering salutary sacrifices to God for the expiation of sin, and drawing from his character of sacrificer a supreme authority over the rest of mankind, whom he teaches and guides in the way of salvation. Such was the priest before the coming of Christ—a mysterious being, related both to heaven and to earth. As such, the priest represented and prefigured Christ, the High, the Chief Priest, in a most special sense. As he was chosen from among men, he represented and prefigured Christ as man. As he was obliged to be without blemish, he shadowed forth Jesus Christ as the lamb without blemish, without spot. As he was the man, the minister, the portion of God, cleric consecrated to God, wholly occupied with the interests of God, he prefigured Jesus Christ as the God-Man. As he was vested with the functions and powers of the priesthood by a holy anointing, he showed that the Incarnation was, for our Saviour, an anointing altogether divine, celebrated by the prophets, which causes the name of Christ—the anointed—to be added to his name Jesus.

2. *And Jesus Christ to-day.*

From the beginning God has always shown a great desire to be "with the children of men." In order to induce man to stay with him, God implanted in the human heart an insatiable craving for happiness. This craving haunts man through life, and pursues him even to the grave. This continual restlessness is the home-sickness of the soul—its craving after God—the only source

of true happiness. That God, who planted in the human heart this desire for the divine presence, found also means to satisfy this desire. He first revealed himself to man by creation. Although hidden in creation, he constantly speaks to man through his works. The architect speaks to us through a beautiful building; the painter through a painting; the writer through his book. God speaks to men in like manner through the works of creation, which manifest his power, his wisdom, and his divinity. The good and pure behold, indeed, God in creation; they see his power in the storm, in the cataract, in the earthquake. They see his wisdom in the laws that govern the boundless universe. They see his beauty in the flower, in the sunbeam, and in the many-tinted rainbow.

God, however, made use of a more perfect means to reveal to man his divine presence. This was his word. If a friend visits you at night, and finds you sitting in the dark, he speaks; he makes use of words to show that he is really present. In like manner, God, wishing to reveal his real presence to man sitting in the darkness of this life, has addressed him in words. This is the very first article of faith. God spoke to our first parents in Paradise; he spoke to the patriarchs and prophets, and finally, as St. Paul assures us, he has spoken, for the last time, by his only-begotten Son.

But merely to hear the voice of a friend is not enough for the human heart: it longs for something more; the eyes yearn to gaze upon him. God knows this want of the human heart, and he has satisfied it also. The prophets besought him again and again to show himself: "Show us thy face, O Lord! and we shall be saved."

This, too, was the ardent prayer of Moses: "O Lord! show me thy glory." (Exod. xxxiii, 13.)

In the Old Law God satisfied this desire by manifesting his presence to the Israelites under the form of a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. He next commanded an ark or tabernacle to be made, and there he manifested his presence by a peculiar, supernatural light, called the Shekinah—or Real Presence. But all this satisfied neither man's heart, nor God's unbounded love. If you love a person dearly, it is not enough for you to hear his voice, or to see him in disguise: you wish to behold him face to face. God gratified even this desire. He commanded a tabernacle of wood to be made by the hand of man, and that tabernacle he chose for his dwelling-place. But now, with his own divine hands, he fashioned for himself a living tabernacle, holy and spotless: the Immaculate Virgin Mary, and in that tabernacle he took up his abode. There he formed for himself a human body and soul. Thence he came forth and appeared to men. He appeared to a world in the decline of old age, and in the throes of death, in order that, while everything about them was rapidly going to decay, he might, by his presence, infuse into all new life and fresh vigor. Our Divine Redeemer came into the world as the great High Priest to consecrate it by his Presence and to offer to his Eternal Father, in the great temple of the universe, a sacrifice worthy of the majesty of the Godhead. But as the whole earth could produce no victim worthy of God's sovereign majesty, he himself became the Priest and the Victim by assuming human nature. His whole life on earth is one great act of sacrifice, one mighty action undertaken out of love for

us. He began this great act of sacrifice interiorly at the first moment of his Incarnation, and exteriorly at his birth. He appeared amongst us in human form to be immolated for our sins, and to repair his Father's glory. This mighty act of sacrifice consists, indeed, of various parts, yet they are of such a nature that no part is by itself, strictly speaking, the sacrifice. Every individual act of our Divine Redeemer forms but an integral part of the great work of the Redemption ; and this great work was to be accomplished only by the sacrifice of his life upon the cross. Hence, when on the point of dying, our Lord cried out in a loud voice, "It is consummated." He knew that he had accomplished all the prophecies and realized all the figures concerning him from the beginning of the world : he knew that he had perfectly fulfilled all the designs of his Eternal Father in his regard ; that he had achieved the Redemption of the human race by fully satisfying his Father's justice on the one hand, while on the other he had merited for men all necessary graces, "becoming to all that obey him the cause of eternal salvation." (Heb. v, 9.)

He knew that he had secured those two great objects at the price of his own life. Not content with giving us all else, he concluded his career of suffering and love by the sacrifice even of himself, and then indeed all was consummated; all that he even could do was accomplished.

3. *Jesus Christ, Priest according to the Order of Melchisedech.*

At that time Jesus Christ was our Victim and High-Priest, not in figure, but in person, in reality, in a visible and bloody manner.

There existed before the coming of the Redeemer two distinct kinds of sacrifice—the bloody, or the sacrifice of animals, and the unbloody, or the sacrifice of bread and wine, of the fruits of the earth. These two kinds of sacrifice were offered up even in the very beginning of the world, for Abel sacrificed a lamb and Cain offered to God the fruits of the earth. There were not only two distinct kinds of sacrifice, but also two distinct classes of the priesthood. The one was the priesthood of Aaron, who offered bloody victims; the other the priesthood of Melchisedech, who offered bread and wine.

In his own divine person our Blessed Saviour united both these classes of the priesthood. He offered up bread and wine at the Last Supper according to the rite of Melchisedech, and on the following day he offered up himself in a bloody manner, as the victim of our sins, according to the rite of Aaron.

At the Last Supper he also united the two kinds of sacrifice in one, the adorable sacrifice of his Body and Blood, which he offered up under the *appearance* of bread and wine. "By a method of sacrifice ineffable and invisible to men," says St. Gregory of Nyssa, "Jesus Christ offered himself an oblation and a sacrifice for us, being at the same time both the priest and the lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." When was this? When he gave to those who were with him his own Body to eat and his own Blood to drink. When, therefore, he gave his disciples his Body to eat and his Blood to drink, that body was already sacrificed in an ineffable and invisible manner. (Tom. III in Christ. Resurrect, Orat. I, p. 389.)

The whole life of our divine Saviour was but one

great act of sacrifice. It took him over thirty-three years to consummate this act; but on the eve of his Passion it took him but a few moments to consummate the unbloody sacrifice—the sacrifice of his Body and Blood, the holy Mass. Now, this unbloody sacrifice—the holy Mass—is essentially the very same as the sacrifice of the cross. It differs from the sacrifice of the cross only in appearance. On Mount Calvary, the victim offered to God was the living body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ; and in the holy Mass, the victim is also the living body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

On Mount Calvary, the priest that offered the sacrifice was our Lord Jesus Christ himself; and in the holy Mass, the priest that offers sacrifice is also our Lord Jesus Christ.

On Mount Calvary, Jesus Christ was really and visibly present; and on the altar, during holy Mass, Jesus Christ is also *really* present, though invisible.

On the cross, our Saviour died a *painful* and *bloody* death; but in the holy Mass, our Saviour dies a *mystical* death by holy Communion.

In the holy sacrifice of the Mass, the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ are not dead; no, it is the living body, the living, warm heart's-blood; it is the living, rational soul of our Lord Jesus Christ, united to his divinity, that are offered to God in the holy Mass. In this sacrifice the priest is God—the victim is God. The priesthood of Jesus Christ is but one; it consists in the office assumed by him for the redemption of mankind by the oblation of himself upon the cross.

4. *"And Jesus Christ the same forever."*

We find, in the thirty-first chapter of Deuteronomy, that, when Moses had written the law of God in a book, he gave this book to the Levites, and commanded them to place it in the tabernacle, beside the ark of the covenant, as a testimony against Israel. On another occasion, when many of the Israelites rebelled against Moses and Aaron, and wished to claim a share in the priestly authority, God ordered twelve rods, each bearing the name of one of the tribes, to be placed in the tabernacle, together with the rod of Aaron. On the next morning, it was found that Aaron's rod alone bloomed, and brought forth fruit. This miraculous rod was the emblem of authority. It was a witness that God had confided the spiritual rule to Aaron and his lawful successors, and to them alone. This rod was also placed in the tabernacle, beside the law of God. On another occasion, God ordered a vessel filled with manna—miraculous bread from heaven—to be placed beside the law of God and the rod of Aaron.

These three things, the book, the rod, and the manna, signify the three distinct powers which God conferred upon priests of the Old Law. The book signifies the office of teacher; the rod signifies the office of visible head or ruler; and the manna signifies the grace of God, which was given to the Israelites through the ministry of the priests. The three offices, therefore, of priest, of teacher, and of ruler, or visible head, existed in the Jewish Church of the Old Law when our divine Saviour came on earth. Our divine Redeemer confirmed and consecrated these three offices, by uniting them in his

own divine person. He was the priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech.

He was the teacher of nations, the light of the world.

He was, as the prophets had foretold, and as he himself declared, the king of an everlasting kingdom. As ruler, or king of an everlasting kingdom, he declared that all men had to believe and to do what he taught them if they wished to be saved.

Now Jesus Christ communicated these powers to his Apostles and through them to their lawful successors, the popes, the bishops and priests of the Catholic Church.

The power of saying Mass he bestowed upon his Apostles at the Last Supper. To render the power of the priesthood more complete he bestowed upon his Apostles, three days later, the power of forgiving sins. He breathed upon them and said: "Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven, etc." Later on, he bestowed upon his Apostles the pastoral power—the power of teaching all nations and of governing the faithful.

It is an article of faith that our Lord ordained the Apostles and made them his priests when he said to them at the Last Supper: "Do this for a commemoration of me." It is as if our Saviour said: "As I took bread and brake and gave to you, saying, this is my body; and really and substantially made it my body, and as I having taken the chalice, gave to you, saying, this is my blood; and really and substantially made it my blood, and thus offered to my heavenly Father, in a mystic and unbloody manner, that same victim, my own very body and blood, so do you take bread, and blessing it, make it my body; and taking wine, bless it, and make it my blood; and thus continually present to heaven in an unbloody

manner, not a different, but the self-same sacrifice that is to be offered up in a bloody manner once upon the cross:—Do this for a commemoration of me, for as often as you shall eat this bread, and drink this chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord until he come."

By these words the Apostles were empowered and commanded to celebrate the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass, as the holy Catholic Church teaches.

The Apostle St. Paul testifies that under the Old Law there was no consummation or perfection on account of the weakness of the Levitical priesthood. It was, therefore, necessary that another priest, according to the order of Melchisedech, should arise—our Lord Jesus Christ—who might be able to consummate and to lead to what is perfect all those that were to be sanctified. Hence it is, says the Council of Trent, that our Lord and God offered himself once to God the Father on the altar of the cross, in order to operate an eternal redemption. But as by his death on the cross his priesthood was not to be extinct, he at the Last Supper left to his spouse the Church a visible sacrifice, by which the bloody sacrifice, completed on the cross, might be represented, and its memory might continue to the end of the world, and its salutary virtue be applied to the remission of the sins which we daily commit. As he was, moreover, *a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech*, he offered to his Father his body and blood, under the species of bread and wine; and under the appearance of these things, he delivered his body and blood to his Apostles, whom he consecrated priests of the New Testament; to them and to their lawful successors in the priesthood he gave the command to sacrifice his body and blood

when he said: "Do this in commemoration of me. This is the clean oblation, which the Lord by Malachias foretold would be offered *in every place to his name, which would be great amongst the Gentiles.* This, in fine, is that oblation which was prefigured by the various typical sacrifices offered up during the patriarchal as well as the Mosaic dispensation. It comprises whatever good things they signified, as being the consummation and perfection of them all." (Concil. Trid. 22, C. I.)

The Apostles and all priests lawfully ordained share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ; they are one with him. He continues in them his priesthood forever, in order that by this one perpetual and universal priesthood he may continue to offer up to his heavenly Father, not many different sacrifices, but one and the same sacrifice, now and forever.

"Jesus Christ," says St. John Chrysostom, "has ordained a sacred rite and changed the sacrifice, and instead of the slaughter of animals, has commanded himself to be offered up." (Hom. 24, in I Cor.)

"What then? Do not we offer up daily? We offer, indeed, making a commemoration of his death, and this oblation is one, not many. How one and not many? Because it was offered once, as that which was offered in the Holy of Holies. This is a type of that, and that of this. For we always offer up the same; not, in sooth, to-day one lamb, and another to-morrow, but always the same Lamb of God, so that the sacrifice is one. According to this reasoning, as he is offered up in many places, are there also many Christs? By no means, but one Christ everywhere; both here entire, and there entire,—one body. Wherefore, as he that is offered up

in many places is one body, not many bodies, so also is the sacrifice one. Our High Priest is he that offered up that sacrifice which cleanses us; that same sacrifice do we offer up now—that which was then offered—that sacrifice which cannot be consumed. This takes place for a commemoration of that which then took place. *For this do ye in remembrance of me.* Not a different sacrifice, as did the Jewish high priest, but the same do we always celebrate." (Hom. 17, in Ep. ad Heb. n. 3.) "The oblation which takes place this day, and that which was celebrated yesterday, and that which takes place day after day is the same as that which took place on that great day, and in nothing was that more venerable than this, nor this less valuable than that, but one and the same, equally awful and saving." (Orat. III, Contra Jud. n. 4.)

Since the institution of this unbloody sacrifice our dear Lord has remained in person with us and shall continue to remain to the end of the world, through the instrumentality of the Catholic priesthood.

5. *Through whom it hath well pleased the Father to reconcile all things unto himself, making peace through the blood of the cross.*

The Scripture tells us that after God had created the world, he rested from his labors. (Gen). Nevertheless, our divine Saviour assures us that he and his heavenly Father are "working continually." (St. John.) And, indeed, if we look around us, we shall see that the work of creation is being constantly renewed. Year after year, the living breath of spring brings a new face to the earth. The trees and plants and flowers bud and bloom

again. Every shrub, every animal, every human being that is brought forth into the world is a new creation. The very work of *preservation* is an unbroken continuance of the creative act. The entire visible world is but an image of the invisible, spiritual world. The work of Redemption is a second and more perfect creation. And just as God continually renews the work of creation, so also does he continually renew the divine work of the Redemption. This unbroken renewal of the work of Redemption is wrought in the Sacraments, and especially in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

It is not with our Redeemer as with some great man who lived and suffered eighteen hundred years ago, and of whom nothing remains but an historical remembrance. Jesus is ever living on the altars of his Church, and the Church is his loving body. It is through her ministers that he manifests himself, and works through all ages. Through them he perpetually repeats and uninterruptedly continues his atoning and *redeeming* acts; he continually repeats the commemorative, unbloody sacrifice of his Body and Blood and thus applies to us more effectually the all-sufficient merits of the cross. Christ on the cross offers himself for all; he is the universal Victim. But Christ in the Mass is our property, our Victim. He is there offered up for every individual amongst us. In the holy sacrifice of the Mass the past becomes the present; all that Christ has merited for us, and the human nature whereby he has merited, is henceforth never separated from his divine Person. He is present as the God-Man; he is present in the whole extent of his actions, as the Real Victim.

In holy Mass, therefore, is present our Saviour in-

carnate for us, born for us, he who died for our salvation, who rose for our justification and ascended to heaven as our eternal hope. Mass is the renewal of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, of his birth, his hidden and public life, his passion and death, his humiliation and his glory. It is the living representation of the infinite love and compassion of God towards us; that love which he has revealed and still reveals daily in the delivering up of his only begotten Son.

"Through him it hath well pleased the Father to reconcile all things unto himself, making peace through the blood of the cross, both as to the things on earth, and the things that are in heaven." (Coloss. i, 20.) We know that our first parents, Adam and Eve, transgressed their Maker's law, and in an evil hour marred the glorious work of their creation. Plunged in an instant into an abyss of miseries, they did not attempt to rise, and indeed had not even the power. Their posterity spread over the earth, adding sin to sin, insult to insult, carried with them their rebellion and their crimes. The iniquities of the father were multiplied in his children; one age added to the vices of the other, till at last almost the only intercourse between heaven and earth was the voice of crimes crying aloud for vengeance. And what was there to stay the swift vengeance of God? God stood not in need of these his worthless creatures; poor earth-born man was in nowise necessary for the eternal self-sufficient happiness of God who could in a moment have destroyed him without regret.

Hell, on the other hand, raised its pitiless voice, and demanded with seeming justice that the guilty should be punished. The essential attribute of a God—im-

partial justice—seemed to second the terrible demand. And at this fearful moment, what was it that saved us? The unaccountable, incomprehensible love of God for the most wretched of his creatures. His impetuous love overcame his justice, and, relenting into compassion, he pardoned us.

Out of compassion for sinners Jesus was pleased to be bound in swaddling clothes that we might be released from the claws of hell; he became poor, in order that we might be made partakers of his riches; he became weak that by the merits of his weakness, we might have power over our enemies; he chose to weep and shed his blood, in order that by his tears and blood, our sins might be washed away.

Faith indeed teaches us, and reason itself seems sufficient to convince us that the slightest atonement of the Man-God would be enough; that even one drop of his divine blood would suffice to blot out the sins of a thousand worlds more wicked than our own. Yet for us alone he prodigally shed all his blood. He loved without measure. He would not rest satisfied till he had selected and exhausted in his own person every refinement of suffering that the ingenuity of the most cruel men could devise.

"There are four things," says St. Augustine, "which are to be considered in a sacrifice: *The person* to whom it is offered; *he who* offers it; *what* is offered: and *for whom* it is offered. The infinite wisdom of God has here disposed things in such a manner that he who offers this sacrifice to reconcile us to God, is the same as he to whom it is offered. Moreover, it is he himself who is the victim, he is besides so united to those for whom he

offers himself that he is one with them also. He is the true Mediator. As *God* he receives sacrifices together with the Father with whom he is one, and as man in the form of a servant, he chooses rather to be the victim than to receive sacrifice, lest any one might think that sacrifice was to be offered to any creature whatever. He is himself the offerer, and offering." (Tom. vii, L. x. c. xx.) Theodoret also says that Jesus Christ, "exercises the priesthood as man, but as God receives the things that are offered." (Tom. 1, Interpret in Ps. cix.) So that as upon the cross he was both priest and victim, he is still upon our altars the priest and victim, he offers up himself to his Eternal Father by the ministry of the priests. He who says Mass does but represent the person of Jesus Christ. It is in the name and as the minister of Christ that the priest offers sacrifice. This is evident from the words of consecration; for the priest when consecrating says not "*This is the body of Jesus Christ,*" but he says, speaking in the person of Jesus Christ—"This is my body;" from which it is clear that Jesus Christ himself is the High Priest who offers this sacrifice, using the priest as an intelligent agent, to pronounce in *his name and in his stead* the words of consecration over the bread and wine.

The royal Prophet and the Apostle St. Paul call Jesus Christ a "*priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech.*" He is justly called so, because every day in the Mass he offers to God that same sacrifice of propitiation which he once offered upon the cross; and which he will never cease to offer to the end of the world. "Such a priest as this," says St. Paul, (Heb. vii, 26) "we should have, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who

needeth not, as the other priests, to offer sacrifices first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people." We need a priest who is able to appease the wrath of God, not by the blood of victims, as ordained in the Old Law, but by his own blood, by his own Passion and Death. It is clear that the sacrifice of the New Law is of so great value, that it has not only fully satisfied the Eternal Father for our sins and for those of the whole world—" He is the propitiation for our sins, and not only for ours, but for those of the whole world,"—(I. John ii, 2), but it would suffice to atone for the sins of a million of worlds. It is not only a sufficient satisfaction, as theologians say, it is a superabundant compensation. It is a payment that far exceeds the debt. It is a reparation of honor which pleases the Eternal Father far more than the sins of millions of worlds can displease him. As Jesus Christ is at the same time the victim and the one who offers it, the sacrifice loses nothing of the value and merit, even when offered by the hands of a bad priest; it is always equally profitable to those for whom it is offered; just as an alms loses nothing of its merit even when bestowed by the hands of a wicked man.

This sacrifice of propitiation is offered up daily, nay, hourly, all over the world. Ah! what would become of the world without it? To its efficacy, undoubtedly, must we attribute the less frequent occurrence, in later times, of those terrible punishments which God formerly inflicted upon the wicked. The whole world was once destroyed by a deluge because of sin. Seventy thousand men fell victims to a pestilence sent by God to punish the vanity of King David. Fifty thousand Bethsamites were punished with death for the irreverent curiosity with

which they gazed upon the Ark of the Covenant. Why are there so few instances of such punishments since the coming of Jesus Christ? Sin has lost none of its inherent wickedness; on the contrary, it has become much more malicious by reason of the more abundant lights and graces we receive from God. The Fathers of the Church tell us that the hands of God are bound because in all countries and at all times Jesus Christ is offered up by the priests of the Catholic Church. Indeed, were it not for this sacrifice of propitiation, we should have been destroyed long ago, as were Sodom and Gomorrha. Were it not for this great sacrifice, God would have punished us long ago as our sins have deserved.

"The Mass," says St. Odo, Abbot of Cluny, "is the act on which is based the preservation of the world." (Opusc. 2, c. 28.) "It is to the Mass," adds Timothy of Jerusalem, "that the entire world owes its preservation: without it, the sins of man would have destroyed the world long ago." (Orat. de Proph.)

The property of this sacrifice, then, is to appease God. It is precisely this truth the Apostle expresses in the words: "He offered himself to God for us as a victim of agreeable sweetness." (I Eph. v. 2.) As men are accustomed to forgive an injury in consideration of a service or gift, so God feels appeased and looks upon us with merciful eyes in consideration of the sacrifice we offer to his divine majesty. Had we knelt at the foot of the cross when our Saviour died, what consolation would we have felt, what hope of salvation should we have conceived, had some drops of his most precious blood fallen upon us! A wicked thief, whose life was spent in crime, was filled with so much confidence at the side of our Lord,

that, in an instant, from a robber he became a saint, and from the cross to which he was fastened, he raised himself to the enjoyment of everlasting glory. The same Son of God who then offered himself for us upon the cross, still offers himself daily for us on our altars. The sacrifice offered in our churches is of as great value and of as great virtue as that which was consummated upon Mount Calvary. Hence the Church is accustomed to say, "that the work of our Redemption is as often performed as we celebrate the commemoration of this victim," (in orat. secret. Dom. 9, p. Pent.) the fruits and graces of the bloody sacrifice of the cross being applied to us by the *ungory* sacrifice of the Mass. The voice of the blood of the Lamb of God prevails over our sins which cry to heaven for vengeance, and benedictions descend where punishments are due. How can it be otherwise? "Appeased by the sacrifice of the Mass," says the Council of Trent, "God forgives even the most heinous crimes," (Less. xxiii. c. iii.), that is, for the sake of this adorable sacrifice, God gives to the sinner the grace of repentance, through which he is disposed to go to confession: and by the reception of the sacrament of penance received with the right disposition, he obtains the forgiveness of all his transgressions.

In the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, in the mystery of the Eucharist, our Lord remembers his alliance, contracted with us by the Incarnation and Redemption. He renews the mystery of the Incarnation in every faithful soul by Holy Communion. It is by Communion that he unites himself to us and gives us that same nature that he vouchsafed to take of us; with this advantage, however, that having taken it in its abasement and misery,

he gives it back to us wonderfully elevated and united to God, in order to unite us also to him, and to exalt us to the highest degree of greatness and glory to which it is possible for fallen man to rise. Who can say what our Lord operates in a pure soul by means of Communion? God only knows. The very soul in which these marvels are wrought is not even conscious of them. A soul well disposed receives in a single Communion a favor greater beyond comparison than all the visions and revelations which all the saints together have ever had.

By Communion we are united immediately to the body and blood of Jesus Christ, and by means of his body and blood to his soul and his divinity. His body becomes blended with our body, his blood with our blood, his soul is joined to our soul. Hence there results in us a wondrous change, which makes us like unto our Lord. Our body participates in the divine qualities of his body and our soul in the graces of his soul, according as he is pleased to communicate himself to us, and according to the disposition in which we receive him. His imagination stays and regulates our imagination; his understanding enlightens our understanding, his will invigorates our will, his appetite moderates our appetite, and extinguishes therein the fire of concupiscence; his senses purify our senses. He roots up our evil dispositions; he destroys the seeds of sin; he modifies our humors, and disposes everything in such a manner that the practice of virtue becomes easy to us. "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him." (John vi, 56.)

When I receive the living, divine victim, come down from heaven, Jesus is mine, *all* mine. His divinity, as

well as his humanity, his wisdom, power, mercy,—all his adorable perfections are mine, since he offers them for my happiness. If we knew how to listen to him every time he comes into our souls under the Holy Species, the words that he spake to the blind man on the wayside would fall on our ears: "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" "When I became incarnate in the womb of Mary, and when I died upon the cross, it was for all men; but, at this moment, it is to thee that I give myself:" "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?"

It is chiefly this mystery that establishes between Jesus and the soul which has been nourished by his Body, that ineffable union of grace and life, compared by our Saviour to that which makes *one* his Father and himself: "I and the Father are one; as I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me;" life will flow from my Heart into his. Then can he say, in a manner, what I say to my Father: All that is thine is mine.

After receiving our Lord in Communion, we can say with a just pride: Lord, I am no more unworthy of the regards of thy majesty. O God, consider the face of Thy Christ. Lovest thou not to behold in me him in whom thou art well pleased? Does not justice please thee? Behold, then, what justice, what sanctity burns in my soul united to the Soul of Jesus Christ! I complain no more, O Beauty ancient and always new, of not loving thee as much as thou shouldst be loved, since, at this moment, I love thee with the Heart of thy Son; I complain no longer of being destitute of merits, for now thou beholdest me clothed with the merits of Jesus!

So sweet and efficacious, so admirable and wise is this

manner of reconciling and uniting to himself all things in heaven and on earth, that God in his power, wisdom, and love could not have adopted a means wiser, sweeter, more efficacious and more admirable.

Se nascens dedit socium,
Convescens in edulium,
Se moriens in pretium,
Se regnans dat in præmium—

At birth, our brother he became,
At board, himself as food he gives,
To ransom us he died in shame,
As our reward, in bliss he lives.

O Salutaris Hostia!

We ought then neither to desire, nor see, nor admire anything on earth save the sacrifice of the holy Mass. Were God himself capable of admiring anything he would admire nothing but this mystery and that of the Incarnation. Faith, supplying the defect of our senses, ought to make us remain as rapt with astonishment, as transported with love and joy at the sight of this divine mystery, as if the splendor of beauty, majesty, and glory, which are the delight of the beloved, those treasures, those riches, those infinite perfections which are the admiration of the angels, that perfume of his glorious Body which regales all Paradise—were all clearly manifested to us. To priests especially, this mystery, whose ministers they are, ought to be as much as possible the breath they inhale; they ought hardly to think of anything else. "Do this in commemoration of me." Such is the last will of the divine Victim. He asks but one thing, that having died for us, we should fondly

cherish the memory of this ineffable benefit, particularly when we approach the altar. Jesus wishes to be our inheritance, our treasure, our patrimony, and for this purpose he leaves us his Body and Blood by his last testament. O testament of love! O inexhaustible treasure! O divine patrimony! O wonderful memorial of the prodigies of the Lord! be thou the principal object of all my thoughts and desires, the only treasure of my heart!

CHAPTER II.

Dignity of the Priest.—His Power over Christ's Sacred Body.

From the beginning of the world, God has never ceased to perform miracles for the benefit of men, miracles so great that they will be the admiration of all nations to the end of time. But of all the wonders he has wrought two stand forth pre-eminent. So surprising does the prophet Isaias find them that he calls them the inventions of God: "Make known to the people," says he, "the inventions of God." (xii, 4.) Indeed, it would seem that in both these wonders God has been careful, as it were, to study the manner in which he might best communicate and manifest himself to us. The first of these wonders is the Incarnation, wherein the Word of the Father unites himself to our nature, by a union so intimate that God and man become one and the same person. The manner of this union will always remain incomprehensible to human reason, and known to God alone. So firm and indissoluble is this union that, as St. Denis says, "it never has been, and never can be separated."

"Love," says this saint, "is a unitive virtue, which transforms the lover into the beloved object, and of the two makes but one." Now, what no love in the world ever did, the love of God has done for man. It has never yet happened in the world that love has effectually made one and the same person of the lover and the object beloved. This was a marvel that seemed reserved

for heaven, where the Father and the Son are indeed truly one substance. So great, however, was the love of God for man that God united himself to human nature in such a manner as to make God and man one and the same person; so that God is truly man and man truly God, and all that is truly proper to man may truly and properly be said of God himself. In a word, he whom men beheld speaking, walking, acting, and suffering, was truly God, at the same time that he was truly clothed with human nature, and performing human actions. "Who ever heard of any such thing as this? And who ever saw anything like unto it?" (Isaias lxvi, 8.) A God wrapped in swaddling clothes! A God weeping! A God weary and feeble! A God suffering! O Lord! did not the royal prophet say: "That thou hast made the highest heaven thy refuge, where no evil shall come to thee; and no scourge shall approach thy tabernacle"? (Ps. xc, 9, 10.) And yet the scourges, nails, and thorns have overtaken thee, and fastened thee to the cross. What can be farther from God than this? "It is an admirable work that has proceeded from him," says the prophet Isaias, (xxviii, 21) a work which the Lord performed to prepare the way for a work, if possible, still greater; for one that should be the memorial of all his wonderful works.

This work is the institution of the holy sacrifice of the Mass—a work that exceeds the comprehension of men and angels. Our divine Saviour wished in this gift to surpass all that he had ever yet bestowed on man.

What were the tree of life, the manna, the waters gushing from the rock, the brazen serpent to this? What were all the glories that the patriarchs and prophets ever

dreamt of, compared with this wondrous gift? There is no nation so blessed as we, since we have our Lord always so near us.

Awful indeed are the mysteries of the altar. "Terrible and most awful were the mysteries that were *before* the time of grace," exclaims St. Chrysostom, speaking of the dignity and sanctity of the Mass; "but if we inquire into those that are now in the time of grace, we will find those of the Old Law comparatively trifling. Behold Elias surrounded by a countless multitude, and the victim lying on the altar. The Prophet prays alone, whilst the rest are in profound silence. Suddenly a flame of fire rushes from heaven upon the sacred victim. These things are admirable indeed.

Turn now to our altars, and thou wilt see not only wonderful things, but mysteries surpassing all wonder. "When the moment of consecration comes," says St. James the Apostle in his liturgy, "every one should be silent and tremble with reverential awe. We should forget everything earthly and remember that the King of kings and the Lord of lords comes down upon the altar as a victim to be offered to God the Father and as the food of the faithful. He is preceded by the angelic choirs, radiant with glory. With faces veiled they sing hymns of praise and gladness."

"Then it is," says St. Chrysostom, "that a fountain is opened which sends forth spiritual rivers—a fountain round which the angels take their stand, and gaze into the beauty of its streams and their ineffable splendors."

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is indeed an unfathomable abyss of the most astounding prodigies.

Turn for a moment to the altar, on which the holy

Sacrifice of the Mass is being offered up. The bell has given the signal that the most solemn and awful moment of consecration is at hand. As yet there is only bread in the hand of the priest, and wine in the chalice before him. To worship these lifeless elements would be the grossest idolatry. Suddenly, amid the breathless silence of the multitude the priest utters the divine, life-giving words of consecration, and the bread and wine are utterly changed into the true Body and Blood of our Lord himself. There on the altar is that same Body that was born of the Blessed Virgin Mary, that died for us upon the cross, that was raised again to life, and that even now sits at the right hand of God the Father.

That body is the temple of God, because the plenitude of the divinity dwells in him corporally, and not merely as in a cloud, of which Holy Scripture speaks when relating the manner in which, during the time of Solomon, the glory of the Lord appeared in the temple of Jerusalem. This body is the work, by excellence, of the Holy Ghost, for "the virtue of the Most High overshadowed Mary," and formed divinely this body of the pure blood of the Virgin, so that never, in all creation, has it produced any body of a delicacy, excellence, and perfection to be compared with that of the body of Jesus Christ. In his body are wrought miracles equally great and continual; in it are united infinite merits, because all the actions of Jesus Christ, without any exception, even those which are natural and necessary, are the actions of a Man-God, and are consequently of infinite value; so that, on account of the excellence and perfection of his Person, it is impossible that any action more perfect or sublime could be found. This body is the

sanctuary of sanctity itself because Jesus Christ possesses a soul impeccable and endowed with intuitive wisdom. In fine, it was the worthy abode of the Divine Word. To form this body the Father opened, with abundant liberality, the treasures of his power, the Son, those of his wisdom, and the Holy Ghost, those of his goodness; for if God displayed the power of his arm when he wrought astonishing miracles to glorify the "Ark of alliance," and the Temple of Solomon, which he had caused to be built for his abode, and which were but feeble figures of the body of Jesus Christ, who would dare deny that the Most Blessed Trinity exhausted all the treasures of magnificence in ornamenting the sanctuary of the Divine Word?

The body of our Lord is gifted with incomparable beauty, consisting in the perfect proportion of all its parts, its brilliancy, and impassibility. These qualities it possesses in an eminent degree, because it is the head of the Church triumphant, and the first-born among the dead. If, when he conversed on earth, there was seen in him a divine majesty, tempered by a heavenly sweetness, so that many on beholding him forgot the necessity of eating and drinking, to follow him for several days; if, when he appeared on Mount Thabor, with so brilliant a beauty the Apostles were ravished in ecstasy,—with what perfect graces does he not now shine in heaven, clothed in immortal glory! He must, indeed, be infinitely amiable and beautiful, whose face the angels vie with one another in contemplating; whom the Seraphim see eternally, without being satiated, and in whom our senses shall one day find their beatitude for all eternity; he, in fine, who was upon the earth the object of the complacency of his

Father, as is said in St. Matthew: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

But, if the beauty of the body of Jesus Christ is so great, what must not be the charms of his soul? To assert that these charms far surpass the beauty that all the saints and angels have received from nature and grace, is to express a truth as incontestable, as to say that the whole universe is greater than a grain of mustard-seed. The memory of Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God, the living image of the divine perfections, which are ever present to him, and which he contemplates incessantly. His understanding contains all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. From the first instant of his creation, his understanding saw clearly, face to face, by *intuition*, the whole divine essence; it comprehended the whole depth of the mystery of the Blessed Trinity; it knew in particular, and in all their immensity, the perfections of God; it clearly distinguished in God, as in the purest mirror, all things, past, present, and to come, even all possible things. The knowledge of all the angels together is but darkness and ignorance, compared with the knowledge of Jesus Christ. His will is a continual practice of the most sublime truths, a lamp ever burning, of the most ardent love of God, and the perfect image of the divine will. His love, in fine, is embellished by the habit of all the virtues, ornamented with all the gifts of the Holy Ghost, in a perfect manner, as is becoming his dignity and glorious privileges. It is enriched with habitual grace, in so high a degree, that no created spirit, not even the angels, can comprehend its excellence. If the sanctifying grace with which the Blessed Virgin was filled, was so great, what must have been the measure of

grace given to Jesus Christ? In a word, Jesus Christ is an immense ocean of prerogatives, of all virtues, of all perfections; the more we sound it, the deeper abysses of grace do we discover. Nothing, however, so much exalts the Sacred Humanity of Jesus Christ as the privilege of being united by the Word to the Divinity. It is precisely in this that the eminent dignity of our dear Saviour consists—a dignity which the angels contemplate in an ecstasy of admiration—which Cherubim adore, and which all the affections and desires of the blessed never cease to glorify; for is there a prodigy equal to that of the human nature being so substantially united to the Word as to make but one person? so that we may attribute to the human nature of Jesus Christ, that which belongs to the divine nature, and in like manner may attribute to the divine nature that which belongs to the human nature. Consequently, in virtue of this hypostatic union, we may call God weak, passible, mortal, dead; and say of the human nature, that it is immense, omnipotent, and omniscient. Who will not admire this truth, by which we believe that the Divinity fills and penetrates the Humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ, more than red-hot iron is penetrated by the fire; more than the air by light; more than the crystal by the rays of the sun? Hence it is that his amiability is so great, that, if heaven were opened one instant, all the demons in hell, instead of hating him, as they do, would be compelled by a gentle violence to love him with the most lively ardor. His beauty is so ravishing, that the lost souls would willingly suffer a thousand hells, could they contemplate it for a single instant. His goodness has so many charms that, if the least effect of it could be experienced in hell, that horri-

ble prison would more quickly than thought be changed into a paradise. Such is the excellence of his sanctity, that the displeasure caused him by the least fault far surpasses the joy afforded him by the heroic action of all the saints. His wisdom is infinite, so that he forgets nothing that is past, he is ignorant of nothing present; and he sees the future as clearly as if all things were represented to him in a mirror. His astonishing power equals his will. His age is eternity, his course immutability; his place, immensity, and his measure, infinity. He is so rich, that his wealth is inexhaustible; so provident, that he disposes everything without number, weight, or measure; so constant, that in him there is no change, no shadow of vicissitude; so strong, that on three fingers he supports the world, weighs the mountains, places the hills in a balance; and so elevated is his power, that there is none like to him; in a word, he is higher than heaven, deeper than hell, wider than the earth, vaster than the sea. Everything is naked and open to his eyes. He holds in his hands the life and essence of every being. No one can resist his anger. Thousands and thousands of angels serve him, and tens of thousands stand before him.

Such is, after consecration, the divine Victim on the altar. In the thousands of Masses that are said throughout the world, God works this miracle the moment the priest utters the words of consecration; so that in all these Masses the Body and Blood of our Saviour are really and substantially present.

"At the moment of consecration," our Lord one day said to St. Mechtildis, "I come down, first, with so deep a humility that there is no one at Mass, no matter how

vile and despicable, but I humbly incline towards him and approach him, if he desires and prays for it.

"Secondly, I come down with so great a patience that I suffer even my worst enemies to be present, and grant them the full pardon of all their sins if they wish to be reconciled with me. Thirdly, I come with love so immense that no one present is so hardened but I soften his heart and enkindle it with my love, if he only desires it. Fourthly, I come with liberality so inconceivable, that no one present is so poor but that I am willing to enrich him abundantly. Fifthly, I come with food so sweet, that there is no one, however hungry, but can be refreshed and fully satiated by me. Sixthly, I come with so great light and splendor, that there is no heart, however blinded, but can be enlightened and purified by my presence. Seventhly, I come with so great a sanctity, and treasures of grace so wonderful, that there is no one, however inert and indevout, but can be roused from this state of sloth and indevotion." (Lib. III, Rev. VI, 28).

"Ah! where are we?" exclaims St. Chrysostom; "heaven has nothing, absolutely nothing more than earth. The earth has become a new heaven. Go up to the gates of heaven, yea, go up to the highest heaven: gaze attentively, and I will afterwards show you on our altar that which enraptured you more than anything else in heaven. In the royal palace it is not the gildings and tapestries we admire, but the King on his throne. In like manner, I will not pause in heaven to point to you the angels and archangels, but the Lord who is the King of the angels and archangels. Now, it is the same King of glory that you have upon the altar. It is indeed the same infinite God, the same all-powerful Creator of the

universe, the same loving Redeemer that desires only to be Emmanuel—God with us—a hidden God, a God humbled through love, a Lamb full of divine meekness, a Victim of propitiation for our sins."

The second miracle is that after the words of consecration there remains neither bread nor wine, though the contrary appears to our senses. When Jacob wished to obtain of his father Isaac the blessing which was designed for Esau, he covered his hands with the skin of a kid that he might the better resemble his brother. "It is indeed the voice of Jacob," said the holy old patriarch, "but are those the hands of Esau." (Gen. xxvii, 22). The same happens here—that which we touch with our hands, that which is exposed to our senses, appears to be bread and wine; but the voice, the word of faith, assures us of the contrary, and faith supplies the defects of our weak senses.

The prodigy that is wrought in this change is not brought about as in natural things wherein, when one thing is changed into another, there always remains something of the thing that is changed; for example, when wood is changed into coal or water into ice the substance always remains the same. Thus, for instance, you can make the form of a lion out of a piece of wax or clay, but the wax or clay remains. But here, after the consecration, there remains in the host nothing of the substance of bread, and in the chalice nothing of the substance of wine, but all the substance of bread and wine is changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. The Church properly calls this entire change—*transubstantiation—i. e.*, the changing of one substance into another.

There remains, therefore, in the Blessed Sacrament nothing of the substance of bread and wine; there remain only the color, smell, taste, and other accidents, called the sacramental species.

This mystery of transubstantiation should not appear to us incredible; for is it not something far more wonderful that God should have become man without ceasing to be God, than that bread should be changed into human flesh? The same divine power whereby the Son of God became man, here changed bread and wine into his Body and Blood.

The third miracle that takes place in consecration is that the sacramental species remain without their proper subject or substance. It is the property of such accidents to be inseparably attached to their substance. It is certain, for instance, that whiteness cannot subsist without being attached to some substance, and the same is to be said of taste and smell. But here, according to an order altogether above nature, the accidents of bread and wine are miraculously sustained, without being united to anything, because nothing of the substance of bread and wine is any longer there to sustain them; and the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, which take the place of bread and wine, cannot be the subject of these accidents, that is, of color, taste, smell, and the like. As the manna, which was the shadow and figure of this most wonderful sacrament, had the taste of various kinds of food and yet was none of those things of which it had the taste, so this heavenly manna has the color, taste, and smell of bread and wine, yet it is neither the one nor the other, so that by a continued miracle, God sustains these accidents by themselves.

The fourth prodigy is that not only is the Body of Jesus Christ under the appearance of bread and wine, but Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is entire there, such as he is in heaven. So that the Blood of Jesus Christ, his sacred soul and his divinity, are conjointly with his body in the host under the species of bread; and his body, his soul, and his divinity are also conjointly with his blood in the chalice under the appearance of wine. But as divines observe, all these things are not in the Eucharist after the same manner. Some are there by virtue of the words of consecration, and others by way of concomitance. Those that are there by virtue of the words of consecration, are those which are expressed by the words, "This is my body, this is my blood."

The things that are in the Eucharist by way of concomitance, are those which are necessarily united to that which is expressed by the words of consecration. For when divers things are necessarily joined together, where the one is, the other must be also. Now at present the Body of Jesus Christ is not separated from his Blood, but is united with it as well as with his soul and divinity; therefore his Blood, his soul, his divinity are also in the host with the Body. In like manner his Blood is not, at present, separated from his Body, but united with it and with his soul and his divinity; hence his Body and soul and divinity are likewise in the chalice.

In order the better to understand this, divines say that, had St. Peter or any other of the Apostles consecrated during the three days that our Lord remained in the sepulchre, the soul of Jesus Christ would not have been in the host, because his soul was then in Limbo, and was not united with his Body; so that then there would have

been in the host only the dead Body of our Lord, such as it was in the sepulchre, united, however, to the divinity, from which it was inseparable.

In like manner, when Jesus Christ himself consecrated at his last supper, he was in the Eucharist true God and true man, but passible and mortal as he was at the time. Since his resurrection from the dead, however, he is in the Blessed Sacrament, such as he is now in heaven—glorious, impassible, immortal.

The fifth prodigy wrought in the Blessed Sacrament is, that Jesus Christ is not only whole and entire in each host, whole and entire in the chalice, but he is also whole and entire in each particle of the host as he is whole and entire in each drop in the chalice. This truth we read in the Gospel. At the Last Supper Jesus Christ did not consecrate separately each piece of bread with which he communicated his Apostles; he consecrated at once such a quantity of bread as was necessary to communicate all of them after it had been divided. The Gospel, speaking of the consecration of the chalice, expressly takes notice that Jesus Christ gave it to his Apostles, saying: "Take and divide it amongst you," (Luke xxii, 17) so that every Apostle in receiving a portion of the consecrated bread and wine, received our Lord whole and entire under each species.

Finally, it is a great miracle that when the priest breaks the host or divides the chalice, it is not Christ who is broken or divided; he always remains whole and entire in each particle, how little soever it may be. It is only the species or appearance of bread and wine that is broken and divided.

This is what the Church teaches us in the hymn of Cor-

pus Christi: "He who receives the body of Christ does not bruise it, does not break it, does not divide it; he receives it whole and entire, he makes no division of it; he separates only the signs and accidents." "O illusion of the senses," exclaims St. Jerome; "the accidents with which thou appearest to our senses to be clothed, are broken, but thou, O Lord, remainest whole and entire. Thou remainest always whole and entire without any division, without any corruption, in even the least particle." (4 Apud. Euseb). Who can conceive the power manifested in the august sacrament in such a variety of ways! Thousands of places holding the sacred Body at the same time; God in one host the same as in a million; God in a million of hearts each moment, and two millions, and ten, and a hundred! God consoling and inspiring, and gently leading all these millions of hearts by various ways, all equally wonderful, all at the same moment. God whole and perfect under each morsel, as whole and perfect under the entire mass! Like the manna of which no more than a certain measure remained, no matter how much each one collected, the Christian has as much under the smallest particle as if the largest quantity were received. He has Christ the Lord. On thousands of altars, from the rising to the setting of the sun, and with perpetuity divine, day and night all over the universe, he is offered up each instant and yet remains still in the glory of heaven! Hearing millions upon millions of prayers, and granting millions upon millions of petitions at the same time, of characters millions of times varying, through the length and breadth of the earth and all time, and all for us! Doing what he pleases with his Body, making it, as he does, a prisoner in

this sacramental state and concealing it under the species of bread and wine miraculously detached from their subject, but yet at the same time sustained by a continual miracle!

There are three sorts of prisoners: criminals, debtors, and prisoners of war. Divine love has reduced the Incarnate Word to be a threefold prisoner in the Sacred Host. He though innocence itself, is, as it were, a criminal.

He has become the victim of sinners in order to restore them to grace and satisfy the justice of his Father.

He is a prisoner for debt. Having taken upon himself our sins, he has been obliged to atone for them. This he did from the first moment of his life, and in every Mass he applies to our souls the merits of his atoning sacrifice.

He is a prisoner of war. Love has vanquished and reduced him to this state. Love encloses his immensity within the smallest compass, his eternity, in a moment, his immortality, his wisdom and omnipotence within the species of bread and wine. O wonderful prison! O devoted captive, who, to satisfy his love by a miracle of power and goodness, remains on earth to dwell with us and in us, by a Presence as real and true as it is secret and invisible; aye, remains on earth while at the same time he dwells in heaven!

Well may we exclaim with the psalmist, "Who shall declare the power of the Lord?" (Ps. cv, 2.) Who shall set forth all the wonders of his works? The Blessed Eucharist is truly the memorial of all his wonderful works!

O wondrous dignity of the priest! To have power over Christ's Sacred Body! His power resembles the

power of the three divine persons. He is, as it were, a God himself, because he performs the works of God.

God the Father says to his son: Filius meus es tu, ego hodie genui te. (Ps. ii, 7.) The priest approaches the altar in the name and with the power of the Father. After consecration he can say in truth to the Son of God: "Ego hodie genui te."

The word of God has created the world, and the word of the priest produces the Creator himself.

In the beginning God said: Fiat lux. The priest pronounces the words of consecration, and all the miracles contained in the creation of the world, are surpassed by the miracles wrought upon the altar.

Were God to speak another fiat and thereby produce hundreds of new worlds, and were the priest at the same time to pronounce the words of consecration over the bread and wine, all the angels and saints of heaven would gaze with more reverence and awe upon the miracles wrought at consecration than even on those wrought in creation.

The hands of the priest more sacred than the cherubim that uphold the mercy-seat; more venerable than the sapphire throne on which appeared the ancient of days; more blessed than even the spotless womb of the immaculate Virgin Mary,—his hands touch and handle the Incarnate Word, his hands bear that sacred body, before whose dazzling splendor the angels veil their faces in trembling awe. Yes, at the altar we can behold with the eyes of faith the blessed spirits in the attitude in which the Evangelist beheld them: "They lay *prostrate* on their faces before the Lamb of God." (Apoc. vii, 11.) But the priest is *standing* at the altar; his is the

authority, and his the action. The angels are only witnesses of the holy sacrifice; God wills that the priest should be its minister. The angels are prostrate before the Lamb upon the altar, but the priest is a welcome guest at the table of the divine Lamb. The priest incorporates himself with *him* on whom the angels gaze with awe and reverence.

The holy Church, contemplating the unutterable privilege of the blessed Mother of God, cries out in admiration: "O blessed is the womb of the Virgin Mary that bore the Son of the eternal God; and blessed are the breasts that suckled Christ our Lord!" But we can say, with even more justice: "O blessed, thrice blessed, are the hands of the priest into which the eternal Son of God descends every day from heaven; blessed are those hands which bear, which handle, which sacrifice, the ever-blessed Son of God!" The Son of God descended but once into the chaste womb of the Virgin Mary; he descends every day into the hands of the priest.

Five words uttered by that glorious Virgin brought the eternal Word into her sacred womb. Five words of the simplest priest bring the same eternal Word upon the altar. If the consent which Mary gave was the conditional cause of the mystery of the Incarnation, the action of the priest is the efficient cause of transubstantiation,—that new Incarnation, which is but the extension of the first. What Mary did but once, the priest does every day. While she gave the Son of God a life of suffering, which ended on the cross, the priest brings him forth on the altar in a state immortal and impassible.

The eternal, omnipotent God, in whose presence the pillars of heaven tremble; that God before whom the earth, and all that dwell thereon; before whom the boundless universe, with all its countless suns and planets; before whom all created things, are but as a drop of water, as a grain of sand, as if they were not,—that God of infinite majesty and glory made himself subject to the Apostles and their successors in the priesthood, when he said: "Do this for a commemoration of me!" The monarchs of the earth have great power; their commands are obeyed, their very name is respected and feared, thousands and thousands of their fellow-men are subject to them; but the priestly power is far greater. Great was the power of Adam when he came forth from the hands of God, in all the majesty of justice and innocence. He was the king of creation, all the creatures of the earth obeyed him. Great was the power of Moses when, by a single word, he divided the waters of the Red Sea, and led a vast multitude, dry-shod, through the midst of the surging billows. Great was the power of Elias, who caused fire to rain from heaven upon the heads of his enemies. Great was the power of Joshua, who, in the heat of battle, raised his hand to heaven, and commanded the sun: "O sun! move not," he cried, "and thou, moon, stand still!" And the sun and the moon obeyed his voice. They stood still in the midst of the heavens, for the space of an entire day. Great, indeed, was the power which God thus gave to man, but the power given by Christ to his priests is infinitely greater. Whenever they say Mass, they hold in their hands, after the words of consecration, Jesus Christ their Lord and God; they receive him, they give him to the faith-

ful. This power of the priest surpasses even the power of creation. By creation, God by his word produces the substance of bread out of nothing; but, by the words of the priest in consecration, the substance of bread and wine is changed into the most sacred body and blood of Christ.

Hail! priest of the Lord! Thy sublime dignity is far beyond human comprehension. "Excedit omnem cogitationem donum dignitatis sacerdotalis." (St. Ephrem, de Sacerd.)

CHAPTER III.

Dignity of the Priest—His Power over Christ's Mystic Body—Over the Faithful.

In the Incarnation, God has received human nature into his bosom by uniting our nature to the Divine Word; in the holy Mass God wishes man to receive him into his heart. Man is united to God by the astounding miracle of the Incarnation. The God-Man unites himself to us all by the prodigies wrought in holy Mass. In the Incarnation God and man are united in one person —the Son of God. In the holy Mass all those become united with God who receive his Body and Blood. God becomes one with them, not indeed by a hypostatic and personal union, as in the Incarnation, but by a union that approaches it as nearly as possible.

However, as Jesus Christ does not wish to enter souls as long as they are in mortal sin, the great power of the priests to change bread and wine into Christ's body and blood would be of little avail to the greater part of mankind, had not Christ given them another power, namely, that of forgiving sins by means of the sacraments, especially by the sacraments of baptism and penance "Go," said he to the Apostles and priests; "baptize mankind in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them." (Matt. xxviii, 19; John xx, 23.) This power is given to priests to free men from their

sins, and prepare them for this wonderful union with Christ in holy Communion. But what does it mean to have the power of forgiving, of destroying sin? Sin is so great an evil, that, were all the men on earth, were all the saints and angels of heaven, to perform the most rigorous penances; were they to sacrifice everything for the love of God, yet, with all their good works, they would not be able to blot out a single sin. Nay, even the fierce fires of hell, though burning throughout all eternity, can never destroy a single mortal sin. The power of removing mountains is indeed a great power; but the power of removing sin from the soul is far greater. The power to raise the dead to life is wonderful; but the power to raise the dead soul to life is still more wonderful. To have the power to create new worlds is to partake of God's own omnipotence; but to have the power of forgiving, of destroying sin, is to hold the very place of God himself—it is to perform one of the greatest works of God's almighty power.

Let us take a man who, of his own free-will, has made himself a slave of sin, a slave of the devil. Who shall free him from this shameful bondage? Shall we call upon the angels and saints of heaven? The saints of heaven are the friends of God, and God honors them by hearing their prayers. They may pray for the sinner, they may obtain for him innumerable graces, but they cannot free him from a single sin.

Shall we call upon his guardian-angel? The guardian-angel may warn the sinner, he may assist him, he may urge him to do penance, but the guardian-angel cannot free him from the chains of sin.

Shall we call upon St. Michael? St. Michael is most

powerful; he is the prince of the heavenly hosts; he has conquered Satan and his hellish crew. He can compel the evil spirits to flee away from the sinner, but he cannot free that sinner from a single sin.

Shall we, then, call upon the Blessed Virgin Mary herself? The Blessed Virgin is the Mother of God; she is queen of angels and men; her very name is the terror of hell. She can pray for the sinner, and her prayers are all-powerful with God, but she cannot forgive a single sin; no, not even a single venial sin!

Seek where you will, throughout heaven and earth, and you will find but one created being who can forgive the sinner, who can free him from the chains of sin and hell: and that extraordinary being is the *priest*, the Catholic priest. "Who but God can forgive sins?" was the question which the Pharisees sneeringly asked. "Who but God can forgive sins?" cry the Pharisees of the present day, and we answer: There *is* a man on earth that can forgive sins, and *that* man is the Catholic priest.

Yes, the priest not only declares that the sinner is forgiven, he *really forgives* him. The priest raises his hand, he pronounces the words of absolution, and quick as a flash of light, the chains of hell are burst asunder, and the sinner becomes a child of God. So great is the power of the priest, that the judgments of heaven itself are subject to his decision; the priest absolves on earth, and God absolves in heaven: "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed also in heaven." These are the ever-memorable words which Jesus Christ addressed to the Apostles and to their successors in the priesthood.

Suppose that our Saviour himself were to appear here in his human form among us; suppose he were to enter one of the confessionals, to hear confessions. Now, let a priest enter another confessional for the same purpose. Suppose that two sinners go to confession, both equally well disposed, equally contrite. Let one of these go to the priest, and the other to our Saviour himself. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ says to the sinner that comes to him, "I absolve thee from thy sins;" and the priest says to the sinner that goes to him, "I absolve thee from thy sins." Now, the absolution of the priest will be just as valid, just as powerful, as the absolution of Jesus Christ himself. The sinner who goes to the priest to confession, will be just as well absolved as the sinner who goes to our Blessed Lord himself.

At the end of the world, Jesus Christ shall judge all men himself, "for the Father judges no one, but he has left all judgment to his divine Son;" but as long as this world lasts, Jesus Christ has left all judgment to his priests. He has vested them with his own authority, with his own power: "He that heareth you," he says, "heareth me." He has given them his own divine spirit: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosesoever sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven; and whosesoever sins you shall retain, they are retained."

The priest is the ambassador, the plenipotentiary, of God. He is the coöperator, the assistant, of God in the great work of redemption. This is no exaggeration, it is the inspired language of the Apostle: "Dei adjutores sumus." (1 Cor. iii): "We are the coöperators, the assistants of God." It is to the priest that God speaks, when he says: "Judge between me and my people:" "Judica

inter me et vineam meam." (Isa. v.) "This man," says God, speaking to the priest,—"this man is a sinner; he has offended me grievously; I could judge him myself, but I leave this judgment to your decision. I shall forgive him as soon as you grant him forgiveness. He is my enemy, but I shall admit him to my friendship as soon as you declare him worthy. I shall open the gates of heaven to him as soon as you free him from the chains of sin and hell."

"Si habes brachium sicut Deus," asks God of Job, "et si voce simili tonas?" (xl, 4.) Hast thou an arm like God? Hast thou like him a voice of thunder? Yea, Lord, the priest can answer; when I forgive sin, my arm is strong like thine, for I break the chains of sin. My voice thunders like thine, for it bursts the fetters of hell; my voice changes thine enemy into thy friend; it transforms the slave of hell into an heir of heaven.

The power of forgiving sins surpasses that of any created being, either in heaven or on earth. An earthly judge has great power, yet he can only declare one innocent who has been falsely accused; but the Catholic priest has power to restore to innocence even those who are guilty.

The kings of the earth are powerful, yet their power extends only over a few countries, while the power of the priest extends over the whole earth. His power reaches to the highest heavens; it penetrates even to the very gates of hell. The treasures of kings are silver and gold—perishable metals; but the treasures of the priest are the imperishable merits and graces of our Lord Jesus Christ. Kings have power only over the bodies of men; but the priest has power over their souls. Kings have

power only over their subjects; but kings and emperors themselves are subject to the priest. From him they receive not only the light of faith, but also the pardon of their sins, the grace of God. Kings have power to open and to close the prison-gates of earth; but the priest has power to open and to close the gates of heaven and hell. His power is felt in heaven; he opens its gates to the elect. His power is felt in hell; he snatches from its jaws its unhappy victims. His power is felt in purgatory; he consoles and delivers its inmates from their fiery dungeon.

As our Lord has given power to the priest to free from sin the souls of men by applying to them the merits of redemption, need we wonder that he has also given the priest the power to free certain creatures on earth from the curse of sin, by applying to them the blessings of the Redemption? "Every creature," says St. Paul, "is sanctified by the word and by prayer." (1 Tim. iv, 5.)

Need we wonder that God gave the priest the power to cast out devils, and to keep the evil spirits from harming us? "And calling together the twelve Apostles," says St. Luke (ix, 1), "he gave them power and authority over all devils."

There is a king, possessed by an evil spirit. Now there is not a king or ruler on earth who has the power to deliver him; yet this wondrous power has been granted to the priest. There is a house haunted, a family tormented by evil spirits. Now there is no power on earth, neither the power of science nor the power of armies, that can expel these evil spirits. This supernatural power belongs to the priest alone.

About the year 1779, an honest, industrious farmer,

named Adam Livingston, of Dutch descent, a Pennsylvanian by birth, and a Lutheran in religion, moved with his large family from Pennsylvania to Middleway, now Cliptown, near Martinsburgh, Virginia. He soon acquired here a handsome property. He was kind, generous, and hospitable. A poor Irish traveller, a Catholic, being ill while in Livingston's neighborhood, was taken into his house, carefully nursed, attended through his last sickness, and decently buried. The only thing Mr. Livingston refused to do for the sick man was to send for a priest. Livingston had never seen one, and in common with the generality of his class, he had probably very extraordinary ideas of Catholic priests. Many at the time actually believed that priests were the living emissaries of Satan; that they had horns and cloven feet, like their master, and various other equally enlightened fancies. Nothing, therefore, could induce any of the Livingstons to accede to the dying man's entreaties and this through no natural hardness of heart; for they were all of kindly disposition, but because to them the request was absurd, of no consequence, and that it was far better to disregard it. Soon after the death of this poor traveller, Mr. Livingston appeared to be given over to the strange visitant in good earnest. His barn caught fire and burned down, nobody knew how; his horses and cattle died; his clothing and those of his family, their beds and bedding, were either burnt, or cut into shreds so small that they could not be mended or put together again, generally in little pieces in the shape of a crescent. Boots, saddles, harness, all shared the same fate. Balls of fire rolled over the floors without any apparent cause. All conceivable noises tormented their ears. Their fur-

niture was banged about at the most inconvenient times. Their crockery was dashed to the floor, and broken to atoms. These things deprived them of sleep, tortured their nerves, and terrified their very souls. Very soon the family were reduced to such physical and mental distress that the whole neighborhood were aroused. Each one freely professed his sympathy and advice. Livingston sent far and wide for ministers of all denominations, for conjurors of all kinds, to come and lay the devil, but the evil one gave them a most inhospitable reception, mingled with a malice so minute, and yet so overpowering, that it actually seemed as if he and all his imps were making a laughing-stock of them. The ministers' tracts and the conjurors' riddles were flung about the house, with the utmost contempt.

A book of Common Prayer, used by a Protestant minister in conjuring the spirit, was unceremoniously thrust into a vile place. Often while the Reverend gentleman were haranguing the evil spirit, a great stone, apparently knocked down the fireplace, brought their exhortations to a sudden close, and so terrified them that they beat a hasty retreat and unceremoniously departed. Less pretentious visitors were hardly treated any better. One old Presbyterian lady, says Father Gallitzin, told a company at a tea-party that "having heard of the clipping, to satisfy her curiosity she went to Livingston's house. Before entering it, however, she took off her new black silk cap, wrapped it up in a silk handkerchief, and put it in her pocket to save it from being clipped. After a while she stepped out again to return home. She drew the handkerchief out of her pocket, and opened it; her cap was cut into ribands." In this hopeless misery

Mr. Livingston had a dream so remarkable and so vivid that it was more like a vision. This favor was perhaps granted him on account of his hospitality to the poor traveller. He dreamed that he had, with the greatest difficulty, toiled up a rugged mountain. At the top of the mountain he saw a beautiful church, and in the church, a man dressed in a strange garb that he had never seen before. While gazing upon this person, a voice said to him: "This is the man who will bring you relief." He related this dream to his wife and many other persons, one of whom told him that the dress he described was precisely the kind worn by the Catholic priests at the altar and advised him to send for one of them. But Livingston, discouraged at so many failures, paid little attention to this advice. At last importuned by his wife, he inquired where a Catholic priest could be found. Some one knew of a Catholic family, named McSherry, living near Leetown, where he would be likely to find a priest. As Livingston's troubles kept on increasing, and his wife continually entreated him, he resolved at last to go to Mr. McSherry and inquire for the priest. He began to think that after all a Catholic priest could not do him much more harm than he was enduring. Mrs. McSherry met him at the gate of her residence, and asked him his errand. He told her he would like to see the priest, to which she replied that there was no priest there, but one would be at Shepherdstown to say Mass the next Sunday. Mr. Livingston went to Shepherdstown on the day she told him, and the moment the priest, Rev. Dennis Cahill, came out upon the altar to say Mass, Mr. Livingston was so affected that he cried out before the people: "That is the very man I saw in

my dream!" He remained during the Mass in the greatest agitation, and as soon as the priest had retired into the sacristy, Livingston followed him, accompanied by Mr. Richard McSherry, and an Italian gentlemen, Mr. Minghini, who kept a boarding-house at Sulphur Springs. These were among the most prominent members of Mr. Cahill's mission. They had heard the exclamation, and knew something of the circumstances. No sooner, however, had Mr. Livingston, with tears and sobs, made known his errand, than the bluff and hearty priest laughed at him, and told him his neighbors were teasing him; to go home, to watch them closely, and that they would soon get tired of the game. The other gentlemen, however, took the part of Mr. Livingston and urgently requested the priest to visit his house. Rev. Father Cahill yielded at last, though very reluctantly. He assured them that it was all nonsense, loss of time, and an entirely unnecessary journey. As soon as he had reached the house, however, he heard and saw pretty clear proofs of the truth of Livingston's story. The good priest sprinkled the house with holy water, whereupon the disturbances ceased. When the priest was leaving, just as he was crossing the threshold, a purse of money, which had disappeared some time before, was laid at his feet. Some time after this, the disturbances having recommenced, Father Gallitzin visited the place. He intended, as he related afterwards to Rev. Mr. Bradley, to exorcise the evil spirits for good and all. As soon, however, as he began, there arose such an unearthy din, such rattling and rumbling, as of innumerable wagons, that his nerves were shattered; he could not read the exorcism. He was obliged at last to go for Rev. Father Cahill, a man of pow-

erful nerve, and hearty faith. Rev. Father Cahill returned with him to Livingston's, and bidding all kneel down, he commanded the evil spirit to leave the house, without hurting any one present. After a stubborn resistance, the evil spirit was finally conquered and compelled to depart forever. Rev. Father Cahill said Mass there afterwards, and there was no further trouble. Father Gallitzin carried a trunk full of clothing, which had been cut to pieces by the spirits, back to Conewago, where they have been seen, even of late years, by worthy priests. Among these clothes, were one or two garments marked in quite a peculiar manner.

One bore the impress as of a hand burnt into the cloth, and the other the letters I. H. S. burnt in the same manner. Scarcely had the Livingston family been relieved from the torments of the spirit than they were visited by a consoling voice, which remained with them for seventeen years. It has been supposed that this voice came from some soul suffering in purgatory, for some reason permitted to visit, console, and, finally, to instruct the family. This may, perhaps, have been in reward for the hospitality shown the poor Catholic, who died at their house. Out of gratitude for the relief he had received at the hands of the priest and out of reverence for that Church which alone could cast out devils, Mr. Livingston, with a portion of his family, desired to be instructed and received into the Church. After teaching them the rudiments of religion, Father Cahill received them into the Church. Mrs. Livingston also became a Catholic, but she was never sincerely converted. She always said that she was a Judas. The family had scarcely made their profession of faith, and heard one or

two Masses, when a bright light awoke Mr. Livingston one night, and a clear, sweet voice told him to arise, call his family together and pray. He did so. The hours passed as moments while the voice prayed with them, leading their prayers. The voice spoke to them in the most simple yet eloquent manner, of all the great mysteries of our holy faith. These truths, dimly guessed at before, and accepted because the Church taught them, became now clear, intelligible and fascinating. Among other things the voice said, that all the sighs and tears of the whole world were nothing in comparison with one Mass in which a God is offered to God. The voice exhorted them to cherish a boundless devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary; it implored them to pray continually for the suffering souls in purgatory, whose sufferings the voice could never weary of describing. Once, in illustration of these sufferings, a burning hand was impressed upon some article of clothing, directly before the eyes of the family. The voice also urged them to practise hospitality and to dress with simplicity. It would reprove the least extravagance in which any of them might indulge, and induced them to perform many voluntary penances, and long, strict fasts. He urged them to practise unbounded charity and to pray continually. Mr. Livingston, to whom the voice more particularly addressed itself, was made its agent for innumerable good works. He would be called upon at night to undertake long journeys to persons taken suddenly ill, or in affliction. He would receive messages without any explanation, which he was enjoined to give at once to different persons, to whom they would prove of immense relief, of amazing prophecy, of timely warn

ing. The voice foretold events which were always verified, and which explained the meaning of many other utterances. On one occasion Mr. Livingston and his family were together in the room, when there appeared among them a young man very poorly clad, and, though it was bitterly cold, he was barefooted. They asked him from what place he came. He answered: "From my father." "Where are you going to?" "I am going to my father," he said, "and I have come to you to teach you the way to him." He stayed with them for three days and three nights, instructing them on all points of Christian doctrine. They asked him if he was not cold and offered him a pair of shoes. He answered that in his country there was neither heat nor cold. When he left the house the same idea occurred to each of them, that, as they had not noticed when he came in, they would watch and see what direction he took when he went away. They saw him go into a lot in front of the house and then disappear. At that time there was no priest living in the neighborhood, and very few Catholic books were to be had even in the large cities, but Bishop Carroll, Fr. Gallitzin, Fr. Brosius, Fr. Cahill, Fr. Pelletz, and other clergymen who conversed with Mr. Livingston, were astonished at his knowledge of the Catholic religion, and were all convinced that he had been instructed from above. Mrs. Livingston heard the voice oftener than the others, and endeavored by every means in her power to falsify its predictions. Among other things, the voice said that she would die in her own house. She was so often rebuked by it that she would not stay at home, but went to the house of a Quaker family. While there she fell ill, and to prove

that the voice was wrong, she positively refused to be taken home; she, however, finally begged to be carried back,and died in her own house, as predicted. Fourteen persons were converted in one winter by these strange manifestations, which were well known and widely discussed. Others, influenced by the accounts they had heard of them, received clearer impressions of the reality of another world, of the proximity of the evil one, and of the intimate union between the Church Militant and the Church Suffering. (Life of D. A. Gallitzin, by S. M. Brownson).

CHAPTER IV.

Dignity of the Priest—His Power of Preaching the Word of God.

From the beginning of the world, the depravity of man has shown itself in the constant endeavor to reject the truths of eternal salvation. To this fact we must ascribe the great ignorance and the licentiousness which have at all times afflicted society. Human passion acknowledges no law, and respects no rights, however sacred. Where passion has the power, it exercises it to the advantage of self and to the detriment of social order. To remove this ignorance of the mind and this depravity of the will, it is necessary to impart infallibly to the mind the light of truth, and to lay down authoritatively for the will the unchangeable principles of morality. To accomplish this twofold task, Jesus Christ empowered his Apostles, and their lawful successors in the priesthood, to teach his holy doctrine authoritatively to all nations: "Go," said he to them, "and teach all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." (Matt. xxviii, 19, 20.) He thus empowered them to preach, explain, and preserve his holy doctrines, pure and uncorrupted, and to condemn and reject all false teachings. He empowered his Apostles to denounce crime, and to encourage virtue; to trace out for every one his individual duties, to monarchs as well as to their subjects, to the learned and to the ignorant, to the rich and to the poor, to the just and to the sinner. He empowered

his Apostles to offer to all instruction, counsel, and hope; to encourage the good, to strengthen the weak, and to convert the sinner; to narrate the sweet consolations of the just, and to describe the fearful state of the impenitent sinner; he empowered his Apostles to condemn and reject all false principles, impious writings, and wicked societies; in a word, Christ empowered his Apostles to proclaim his doctrine, and apply it to all; to defend his rights on earth against every enemy; to resist with all their might every dangerous passion and tendency; to make constitutions and decrees conducive to the preservation of faith and morals; and even to proscribe such opinions as approach, more or less closely, to heresy.

There is not a sound maxim, or a political truth, whose germ is not found in the word of God. Now it is the popes, the bishops and the priests of the Church whom God has appointed to dispense these treasures. The priest can say as St. Paul did to the Christians of his time: Be not deceived; I have not preached to you my Gospel, but the Gospel of God. "Evangelium Dei evangelizavi vobis." (II. Cor. xi, 7.) O glorious privilege of the Catholic priest! He speaks in the name of the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, and the doctrine he preaches is not the invention of his own brain, nor the speculation of some superior genius. No! it is the word of God. The priest has received his mission from Christ through the Apostles and their lawful successors—the Catholic bishops. "Pro Christo legatione fungimur, tanquam Deo exhortante per nos. (II. Cor. v, 20.)

Every Catholic priest is one of those fishers of men whom God promised to send into the world, in order to take souls in their nets. "Ecce ego mittam piscato-

res multos, dicit Dominus, et piscabuntur eos." (Jerem. xvi, 16.) That promise has been fulfilled and is being fulfilled every day in the person of the preachers of the sacred Word. The Lord says to every priest called to the apostolic ministry: "Ex hoc jam homines eris capiens." (Luke v,10.) "Men," said St. Gregory of Nyssa, "are swimming in the bitter waters, in the midst of the rolling billows and the stormy seas of this life." Homines natantes in mobilibus rebus, et amaris hujus vitæ procellis. (Orat, 31.) Without charity, without mutual support, they would devour one another. "Mare in figura diciter sæculum hoc. . ., ubi homines cupiditatibus perversis et pravis sunt velut pisces se invitem devorantes." (St. Aug. in Ps. lxiv.) The net of the sacred Word takes them in order to civilize and sanctify them. The fisherman knows not what kinds of fish he will take; neither does the preacher know which of his hearers will profit by his zeal. "Sicut qui retia jactat in aquam, nescit quos pisces comprehensurus sit, sic et doctor quando divini sermonis retia super populum jactat, nescit qui sint accessuri ad Deum." (Auct. oper. imperf. in Matt. Hom. 7.)

Jesus Christ, wishing to excite the faith and hope of his ministers, made, by the hands of his Apostles, two miraculous draughts of fish; the first, almost at the moment of their vocation, the second after his resurrection. The last had many advantages over the first. In the former the net was thrown indifferently to the right and to the left. In the latter the net was thrown only to the right. "Mittite in dexteram navigii rete." (Joan. xxi. 6.) In the first draught the net broke, but in the second the net did not break in spite of the great multitude of fish. In the first there were good and bad fish intermingled,

and their number is not stated in Holy Writ. In the second draught the net contained only choice fish, and their number was marked. "Plenum magnis piscibus centum quinquaginta tribus." (Joan. xxi, 11.) These two draughts of fish, says St. Augustine, represent the Church, in its two different states, such as it is now, and such as it will be, after the general resurrection. "Sicut hâc significata est Eclesia, qualis in fine sæculi futura sit; ita aliâ piscatione significata est qualiter nunc est." (Tract. 122, in Joan.) The first represents the Church Militant, compared by the Saviour, sagenæ missæ in mare, et ex omni genere piscium congreganti. (Matt. xiii, 14.) Heresies rend its bosom. It contains the just and sinners—the elect and the reprobate. The second draught represents the Church Triumphant, that is the elect, who, when time shall be no more, will be conducted to the blissful shores of eternal beatitude. Now, by the disposition of Providence, the priesthood is the indispensable ministry of these two draughts of fish. The vocation of the priest is to draw men from the abyss of vice and error, in which they are plunged, like fish in the sea, and to induce them to live for God in time, that they may be associated with the happiness of God in eternity. As the Saviour himself assembled the fish to the right in the sea, where the Apostles threw their net, and put them, so to speak, under their hands, within reach, thus every day he conducts men to the feet of the sacred orator, and disposes them to profit by the divine Word.

Oh! how great is the power of the word of God! Prodigies and miracles of grace have at all times accompanied the preaching of God's holy word. In the mouth of Nathan it became an arrow of fire which pierced the

heart of David and King David became the model of true penitents. Nineveh is saved by the preaching of the prophet Jonas.

Esdras had hardly commenced the interpretation of the Divine Law, he had scarcely read a few words, when all the people fell on their knees and adored God in repentance and tears. Nothing but sighs and groans were heard, and the Levites were obliged to moderate these transports of grief which drowned the voice of the holy priest. "Flebat omnis populus, cum audiret verba legis . . . Levitæ autem silentium faciebant in omni populo, dicentes; Tacete . . ,et nolite dolere. (II. Esd. viii, 9, 11.) By the preaching of the Apostles, the Holy Spirit renewed the face of the earth. (Ps. ciii, 30.) How did these men, without learning, conquer the universe, and conquer it by trials, humiliations and self-denial; by the irksome law of the Gospel! With no other arms than the word of God! Later still, it was impossible to ignore its divine power in the preaching of St. Vincent Ferrier, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Francis Xavier, St. Peter, St. Frances de Sales, St. Alphonsus, etc. Do we not every day see men puffed up with self-love, and conceit, become by virtue of that holy Word superior to themselves,crucifying their senses, repressing their passions, renouncing their temporal interests and despising the world? The doctrine that the Catholic priest announces to us, is always the same, as St. Paul describes it: Vivus est sermo Dei et efficax, et penetrabilior omni gladio ancipiti, et pertingens usque ad divisionem animæ ac spiritus, compagum quoque ac medullarum, et discretor cogitationum et intentionum cordis. (Heb. iv, 12.)

How often does it break the chains of sin! How often does it separate those who were tied together by an affection too natural or even by the bonds of hell!

There is not a pastor, who has not seen with his own eyes the accomplishment of these promises of the Lord: Ecce ego vobiscum sum . . . Qui vos audit, me audit. Non vos estis qui loquimini sed spiritus Patris vestri qui loquitur in vobis.

Show me, if you can, a single country blessed by faith and civilization, that has not been watered by the prayers and by the preaching, by the tears and by the blood of those who are styled the light of the world—the priests of the Church.

Gifted with the powers of Christ, the priests of the Catholic Church are greater than the patriarchs,—greater, more exalted, than the prophets. A widow of Sarepta fed the prophet Elias for some time. In reward for her charity, the prophet obtained for her the miracle that her pot of meal wasted not, and her cruse of oil diminished not, and thus sustained her family in a miraculous manner. The Catholic priest does more: he feeds not merely *one* family, but all the nations of the world; he gives not mere material bread, but the living Bread from heaven, the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ; he strengthens the souls of men with the oil of grace, which he administers to them in the holy sacraments.

Elias raised the son of the Sulamite to life, but the priest does more; he raises to life the souls of hundreds and thousands. In the sacraments of baptism and penance, he raises to the life of grace the souls of those that are dead in mortal sin. Elias caused fire to rain from heaven upon the heads of the wicked. The priest causes not

mere material fire to fall from heaven, he does far more; he causes the fire of divine love to fall upon the cold hearts of sinners, and move them to contrition: he inflames them to a new and perfect life.

The priest of the Catholic Church is greater than the prophets. The prophets beheld the Redeemer only from afar, in the dim future. The Catholic priest beholds him present before his eyes; he touches the long-wished-for Redeemer with his hands; he offers him up to his heavenly Father; he carries him through the streets; he even feeds on the sacred flesh and blood of the Holy One; he receives him into his heart, and unites himself most intimately to him in Holy Communion.

The prophets foretold that, when the fulness of time should come, God would write his laws, not on stone, but on men's hearts; he would govern men, not by the law of servile fear, but by the sweet bonds of holy love; that God himself would dwell in them, and direct them by his grace. Now, this fulness of time for which the prophets sighed, came with Jesus Christ. He gave his grace, his own divine life, to man, and he gave it superabundantly; and as the ministers of that grace, he chose, not the prophets, not his angels, but the priests of the Catholic Church. O ineffable dignity!

The Catholic priest has the Patriarchal dignity of Abraham. Abraham is called the Father of the Faithful. The priest is, in reality, the father of the faithful; he makes them the children of God, by preaching the Gospel, and especially by the holy sacrament of baptism. The priest stands at the helm of the Church—the ark of salvation like Noah. He is consecrated forever, according to the order of Melchisedech, he is invested with a

dignity far higher than that of Aaron. Aaron offered up only the blood of sheep and oxen, while the priest offers up the blood of the Lamb of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. The priest has the authority of Moses. Moses led the people of God through the desert, to the promised land; the priest leads the children of God through the desert of this life, to the true land of promise—their home in heaven.

"I in them," says Jesus Christ, "and thou, Father, in me. The glory which thou hast given me, I have given them." (John xvii, 22, 23.) Indeed, the priests are divine men. Our Lord himself, quoting the words of the Royal Prophet, says of them: "Ye are gods." To forgive sins, to cause the Holy Ghost to dwell in the soul, to change bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, are miracles that can, properly speaking, be performed only by God himself. Yet, by the power of God, the priest performs these miracles every day. He may, therefore, truly be said to be a god; for, as St. Gregory Nazianzen says, "to have the power of a priest of Christ, is to be a god on earth, with the commission to make gods of his fellow-men." Next to God, the priest is everything. The priest can be understood only in heaven. If men could understand him upon earth, they would die of love.

What admiration and respect, what love and veneration would we feel for him whom the Lord would associate with himself in the government of the universe, whom he would empower to rule with him the course of the stars, the vicissitudes of the seasons, and even to create new worlds. A vocation so marvellous would place this privileged mortal in a rank far higher than the

kings of earth. But the priest is the object of a distinction far more glorious; he is not called, it is true, to direct the course of the sun, to excite or to calm the winds—all this is within the sphere of nature. He is called to a higher office: he is called to sustain the cause of God, to make God's name respected, to defend his interests, to promote his glory, to vindicate his honor. The priest is called to give life eternal to the children of men, and to prepare them for an everlasting kingdom. He is called to give heaven to the elect, to snatch victims from hell, to sanctify souls, to coöperate in the redemption of a world, spiritual and indestructible, to fill the greatest of kingdoms with inhabitants, all radiant with glory everlasting.

The Church is the spouse of Christ, but the priest is her guardian. The Church is an army in battle array, but the priest is her general. The Church is a vessel sailing through the storms of persecution, but the priest is her pilot. The Church is the mystic body of Christ and the faithful are its members, but the priest is the principal member of this mystic body. By the eyes of the priest Jesus Christ watches over his flock; by the feet of the priest Jesus carries to every nation the gospel of peace; by the heart of the priest our Lord diffuses everywhere that divine charity without which all is dead. The Church is the people of acquisition, bought at a great price; but the priest is the leader, the teacher, the prince of this chosen generation. The Church is the sacred edifice, built by divine Wisdom itself; but the priest is the adminstrator of this palace; he is the pillar of the Church upon which rests the whole world. God the Father created the world without the priest, but it is

only through him that he saves it. God the Son has redeemed the world without the priest, but it is only by him that he applies his blood to the souls of men, and secures the fruits of his copious redemption. You can hardly name a single blessing of the Holy Ghost of which the priest is not the chosen instrument. Indeed, as St. Bernard declares that all graces come to us through Mary, so we can say in truth that all happiness, all graces, all heavenly gifts come to us through the priest.

Around the Catholic priesthood human society moves, like the earth around its axis; upon it society depends for its support, its life, its energy, as the planetary system depends on the sun.

No one understands this truth better than the devil and his associates in this world. When they wish to destroy religion they begin by attacking the priests: for, where there is no priest, there is no sacrifice; and where there is no sacrifice, there is no religion, no absolution from sin, no preaching of the word of God. What should we do in the Church? the people would say; there is no Mass; our Lord is no longer there; there is no one there with power to forgive sins; there is no one there to preach the word of God; we may as well stay at home.

Oh, how sad would be the state of society were the priest to be banished from the earth! The bonds that unite the husband and wife, the child and the parent, the friend and the friend, would be broken. Peace and justice would flee from the earth. Robbery, murder, hatred, lust, and all the other crimes condemned by the Gospel, would prevail. Faith would no longer elevate the souls of men to heaven. Hope, the sweet consoler of the afflicted, of the widow and of the orphan, would flee,

and in her stead would reign black despair, terror, and suicide. Where would we find the sweet virtue of charity, if the priest were to disappear forever? Where would we find that charity which consoles the poor and forsaken, which lovingly dries the tears of the widow and the orphan,—that charity which soothes the sick in their sufferings, and binds the bleeding wounds of the defender of his country? Where would we find that charity which casts a spark of divine fire into the heart of that young man, that young woman, and bids them abandon home and friends, and everything that is near and dear to them in this world, to go among strangers, among savage tribes, and to gain there, in return for their heroism, nothing but outrage, suffering, and death! Where, I ask, would we find this charity, if the priest were to disappear forever?

All the other gifts of God would avail us nothing without the priest. What would be the use of a house full of gold, if there were no one to open the door for you? Now, the priest has the key of all the treasures of heaven; it is he who opens the door. He is the steward of the Lord's household, the administrator of his goods. Without the priest the passion of our Lord would profit us nothing. Look at the poor heathens. Of what benefit is our Lord's death to them? Alas! they can have no share in the Redemption, so long as they have no priest to apply Christ's blood to their souls.

Ah! to whom shall I compare the priest? There is no created being like him, even in heaven or on earth. In establishing the priesthood God seems to have exhausted all the treasures of his power and mercy. Indeed, in the light of faith, the man disappears altogether in the

priest. Faith beholds in him nothing but Jesus Christ, continuing, in him and through him, the work of redemption for the honor of his Father and the salvation of mankind.

Truly, when we see the priest of the Catholic Church, weak and sinful as he is, gifted with powers which angels dare not claim; power to forgive sins, power to announce his word, power to which Satan submits, when we see the priest possessing power over God himself, possessing power to bear him, to place him, to give him to whom he wills—we cannot help exclaiming, in amazement: "O wondrous miracle! O unheard-of power!" A greater power than this God could not give: it is his own almighty power! A greater dignity than this God could not bestow upon a mortal being!

Since God, then, has placed the priests of the Catholic Church upon the thrones of his own power and sanctity, since he has given them the titles of "saviours of the world," since he calls them his coöperators in the divine work of redemption, what wonder if he commands all men to hear, to obey, and to honor them, as they are bound to hear, to obey, and to honor God himself! "He that heareth you," says he, "heareth me; He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye."

Need we wonder at the profound respect shown to the Catholic priest by the angels and saints of God, by emperors and queens, and by all true Catholics?

St. Francis de Sales saw the guardian-angel of a young priest whom he had ordained, go in advance to the right of the priest, before his ordination; but, after his ordination, the angel went to the left of the priest and followed him.

The Emperor Constantine the Great had such reverence for the priesthood, that he would not sit down at the Council of Nice, till after all the clergy had been seated; and, even then, he sat only upon a seat below them all. Wenceslaus, King of Poland, would not even sit down in the presence of a priest. St. Catharine of Sienna, and Mary of Oignies, kissed the very ground on which a priest had walked.

St. Francis of Assisi said that if he saw an angel from heaven and a priest, he would first bow to the priest and then to the angel: for though the angel is the friend of God, yet the priest holds the very place of God himself.

One day St. Martin, Bishop of Tours, was prevailed upon by the Emperor Maximus to accept an invitation to dinner. The emperor also invited the most conspicuous personages of his court, among others, his uncle and brother, both counts, and the prefect of the prætorium.

The priest who accompanied St. Martin was seated in a most honorable place between two counts and on the same couch, and St. Martin on a low seat near the emperor. In the midst of the entertainment an officer presented the cup as usual to the emperor, who ordered it to be given to the Bishop, expecting to receive it back from his hand; but, after the Bishop had drunk, he gave the cup to the priest as the next in rank at table. This conduct was exceedingly applauded by the emperor and the whole court.

The empress who attended night and day to the Bishop's discourses sat always at his feet upon the ground. (Butler's Lives of the Saints, Nov. 11th.)

St. Paul wrote to the Galatians: "You received me as an angel of God, even as Jesus Christ. I bear you

witness that, if it could be done, you would have plucked out your own eyes and would have given them to me." (iv. 14, 15.)

The Catholic priest is the agent of the Lord of heaven and earth. Who can conceive a higher dignity?

The Catholic priest is the plenipotentiary of God. Who can conceive a greater power?

The Catholic priest is the minister of God. Who can conceive an office more sublime, more important?

The Catholic priest is the representative of God. Who can conceive a higher commission?

The Catholic priest is the vicegerent of God. Who can conceive a higher station?

The Catholic priest is the Treasurer of God. Who can find a greater benefactor of mankind?

"Audite me, beatissimi Patres," says St. Ambrose, "audite me, stirps Levitica, germen sacerdotale, propago sanctificata, duces et rectores gregis Christi, audite me rogantem vos pariter et timentem: Honor et sublimitas sacerdotalis nullis poterit comparationibus adæquari. Si regum fulgori compares et principum diademati, louge erit inferius quam si plumbi metallum ad auri fulgorem compares." (De Dign. Sacend. c. 2.)

O sacerdos! tu quis es?
Non es *a te*, quia de nihilo.
Non es *ad te*, quia es mediator ad Deum.
Non es *tibi*, quia soli Deo vivere debes.
Non es *tui*, quia es omnium servus.
Non es *tu*, quia Deus es.
Quid ergo *es?* Nihil et omnia.
O Sacerdos!

CHAPTER V.

God The Author of Vocations.

"God wills," says St. Alphonsus, "that all men be saved, but not in the same way. As he has established different degrees of glory in heaven, so he has also on earth established different states of life as so many paths that lead to heaven. On account of its great ends, the priesthood is, of all vocations, the most noble, the most exalted, the most sublime."

God has instituted the priesthood as a most sacred dignity, as a divine ministry on which true religion depends. He has also reserved to himself the right to call whom he wills to this sublime dignity.

"I know, O Lord," says the prophet Jeremiah, (x, 23) "that the way of a man is not his own; neither is it in a man to walk and to direct his steps." "But I have put my trust in thee, O Lord," cries David; "I said: Thou art my God; my lots are in thy hands." (Ps. xxx, 15, 16.)

Under the law of nature and under the written law, as well as under the law of the Gospel, God has always chosen his ministers and consecrated them to promote his glory and the welfare of his people.

I. Under the law of nature it was the first-born of the family who was vested with the priesthood and who exercised it by offering sacrifice to God and by offering public prayer in the name of the assembled people. According to Josephus, the Patriarch Isaac sent his eldest

son Esau to hunt, in order that, by this act of filial love, he might merit the paternal benediction which was to transmit to him the priesthood. Isaac gives as a reason for acting thus his age, which makes it impossible for him to perform any longer the divine service which he owes to God. (Josephus, Jewish Antiq., Book I., ch. 18.)

It is evidently because he had sold his birth-right which embraced the priestly authority, that Esau is called by St. Paul *a profane person*, (Heb. xii, 16) unworthy of the priesthood. St. Isidore of Seville (Comment on Gen. xxv), following Eucherius(Comment on Gen. L. ii. c. 45) thinks that the fragrant vestment which Jacob put on in order to secure by surprise the blessing destined for Esau, was the priestly vestment of the family. The learned Tostatus (Comment on Levit. xxi, Onest. 19) observes that, according to ancients, Ruben, the eldest son of Jacob, lost the priesthood on account of the crime he committed against his father ; and that Judas, the fourth son of Jacob, inherited it by the will of the holy Patriarch.

Moses, on descending from Sinai, caused an altar to be prepared at the foot of the mountain, and sacrifice to be offered to the Lord by the eldest born sons, as is indicated by the Chaldean paraphrase of the text. (Exod. xxiv, 4, 5.) When this great prophet had conferred the priesthood on all the children of Aaron, according to God's command, Jethro, priest of the Madianites, reproached him with not having reserved this dignity for the first-born, at least, according to ancient tradition. (Josephus : *Ant.* bk. iv.) The Jewish doctors assert that before the building of the Tabernacle the use of altars was allowed, and the eldest son of each family sacrificed

thereon. (*Talmud*, Code of Sacrifice, xiv, § 4). St. Paul has recourse to this institution to explain how our Lord Jesus Christ is the head of the Church and the High Priest of the faithful people, although not born of the tribe of Levi, but of the tribe of Juda. (Colos. i, 15, 18.) The Redeemer (he says) is High Priest, as the "first born of every creature," by virtue of the sacerdotal institution, which existed before the written law, an institution which the Apostle calls "according to the order of Melchisedech," (Heb. vi, 20) that is to say, according to the order of the High Priest, who was priest of the Most High under the empire of the law of nature.

God instituted the sacerdotal state in the beginning of the world and admitted to this sublime dignity only those whom he had himself chosen.

II. At the promulgation of the Mosaic law the action of God with regard to the institution and succession of the priesthood was still more striking.

He himself chose the tribe of Levi to exercise the priesthood, although Levi was the third son of Jacob. In this tribe God himself designated the family which should be honored with the dignity of the High Priest; and even the very person who was to be first invested with it. The succession of the priesthood was attached to the natural succession of the families, who were to remain for ever depositories of the sacred authority. The age and qualities requisite for the priests, the defects from which they must be exempt, the rites of consecration, the form of sacrifice —all were determined by God himself with the utmost precision, in order that all might be of divine authority.

This priesthood lasted till the coming of our Saviour.

When Caiphas rent his priestly garments before Jesus, he signified, according to the ancient doctors, that the Mosaic priesthood had been abrogated and that a new one was established.

III. The institution of the priesthood by our Saviour stands forth clearly in every page of the Gospel. The solemn vocation of the Apostles is one of the most striking facts of the evangelic history. St. Mark tells us that Jesus, having ascended a mountain, "called unto him whom he would himself," (Mark iii, 13) and that he appointed twelve to remain with him and preach the Gospel. St. Luke adds that he called them his "Apostles." (Luke vi, 13.) As he walked by the sea-side he saw Simon and Andrew, his brother, casting their nets, and he said to them: "Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men." And going on thence he saw other two brethren, James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, in a ship with Zebedee, their father, mending their nets: and he called them. And they forthwith left their nets and father and followed him. (Matt. iv, 18–22.) Later on our Lord "saw a man sitting in the custom-house, named Matthew, and he saith to him: Follow me. And he arose up and followed him." (Matt. ix, 9.)

As he called to the apostleship those who had not sought it, so he refused to admit those who asked for it. (Luke ix, 57–62.) He chose some and rejected others, according to his good pleasure, wisdom and mercy. That there might be no doubt in this respect, he said expressly to his Apostles: "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and have appointed you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." (John xv, 16.) "As the Father hath sent me, I also send

you." (John xx, 21.) "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. xxviii 19, 20).

You have just seen the sacrifice of the New Law offered by me: "Do this" yourselves "for a commemoration of me. (Luke xxii, 19.) Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained. (John xx, 23.) "Feed my lambs .... Feed my sheep." (John xxi, 15.) "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." (Matt. xxviii, 20.)

Vocation to the apostleship, commission to teach the faith, power to make laws binding in conscience, power to offer the sacrifice of the New Covenant, pastoral care over the children of God, perpetual co-operation on the part of God—in a word, all that constitutes the priesthood, has been instituted in detail by Jesus Christ himself.

And in order that no one may ignore his divine right, our Saviour utters terrible anathemas against those who dare usurp the sacred ministry. He calls them thieves and robbers, who enter the sheepfold by the window and not by the door; that is, who enter without being called by God. He compares such intruders to hirelings, who, instead of defending the flock, abandon them to the murderous fangs of the wolf. (John x, 1–13.) He threatens to reject these guilty wretches on the great day of doom, when he will say to them: "I never knew you; depart from me." (Matt. vii, 23.)

The sovereign dominion of God over the selection of his ministers is written on every page of the New Testament.

The Apostles committed to God the choice of Judas' successor, as if the first of ecclesiastical elections, the model of all others, could be made only by our Lord Jesus Christ himself. (Acts. i, 24.) Before laying hands upon St. Paul and St. Barnabas, the Apostles waited for directions from heaven. (Acts. xiii, 2.)

The election of the first seven deacons was only made after a fervent invocation of the Holy Ghost, whose lawful interpreters the Apostles were. (Acts. vi, 5.)

In the writings of St. Paul how often is homage paid to this sovereign action of God on the choice of his ministers! The Apostle continually recalls the fact that he has received the apostleship directly from God, that God has called him to this holy state, that he is an Apostle by a special grace of God. He also lays down this rule that no one can take on himself the functions of the priesthood on his own private authority, but that he must, like Aaron, be called of God, by a special calling. (Heb. v, 4.) He reminds the bishops of Ephesus and the neighborhood that it is the Holy Ghost who has set them to govern their churches and feed their flocks. (Acts xx, 28.) He teaches all the ministers of the Word that it is impossible for them to preach the Gospel without being sent by God. (Rom. x, 15.)

The Catholic Church teaches the same doctrine. She is so convinced that God himself supplies his people with the pastors they need, that from time immemorial she has prescribed the fast and prayers of the Ember-days, in order to obtain from Heaven worthy and holy ministers for the altar. She thus accomplishes the precept which our Saviour gave her when he said: "The harvest is indeed great, but the laborers are few. Pray ye, there-

fore, the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest. (Matt. ix, 37, 38.)

The teachings of experience add their weight to the testimony of Holy Writ and to the constant practice of the Church. It is evident that had not the hand of God for eighteen centuries peopled the sanctuary, the ranks of the sacred army would long since have been exhausted and the succession of the priesthood broken. But not the violence of persecutions, nor the fury of heresies, nor the passions of men, nor the apostasy of nations, nor even the treachery of some faithless ministers—nor even all the powers of hell combined have been able to dry up the fountain of ecclesiastical vocations—to break the chain of the Catholic priesthood, or to quench the zeal of the priests. Nay, the more pressing have been the wants of the Church, the more generous has the divine goodness appeared to her. The more the difficulties increased, the more talented and the more saintly were the men whom God raised up for the defence of his people. True pastors have always been found to rise in the Church, capable of weathering the storm and of rising superior to fortune. In fact, the most learned doctors have always appeared at the very time in which the Church was attacked by the most powerful heresiarchs. If the divine Pilot of the Church has sometimes seemed to slumber in his bark, it was only to revive our drowsy zeal and to show forth more strikingly the resources of his all-powerful goodness in calming the fury of the waves and in safely guiding the storm-tossed vessel into the harbor. Amid the greatest dangers, the sacred hierarchy has safely guarded the institutions of the Church.

The apparently slight and imperceptible causes which

often determine vocations to the ecclesiastical state, furnish a third and, in my opinion, a very convincing proof of God's intervention in such vocations. See the lives of the saints. The great St. Antony, while yet a youth, heard one day these words of the Gospel: "Go sell what thou hast, give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." (Matt. xix, 21.) These few words made the deepest impression on him, and were the beginning of his vocation to the religious life. St. Augustine was converted by simply reading a few passages in Holy Writ. St. Ignatius of Loyola also was converted by reading the lives of the saints. These two great saints afterwards did immense good in the Church; yet the beginning of their vocation was apparently a chance event, as the saying is, of little or no importance. How many great servants of God have devoted themselves to the service of the altar through having heard a heavenly voice speaking in the depths of their heart and inspiring them with an ardent desire to labor for the salvation of souls! We have known holy ecclesiastics, who acknowledged that they had conceived the first idea of their vocation at the sight of a priest attired in his sacred vestments, or after having been charmed by the holy canticles of the church. He who holds the hearts of men in his hands, has power to make means which are in themselves the most insignificant and inefficacious, all-powerful instruments. The remarkable disproportion between the insignificant causes and the wonderful effects which they produce indicate clearly the operation of that God whose Providence rules the universe.

Finally, the sovereign action of God in the choice of his ministers is again shown by the effects which the

vocation to the ecclesiastical state produces in the soul. Humanly speaking, it is impossible for a young man in the flower of his age, and in the presence of the seductions of the world, to renounce cheerfully the enjoyments and honors which the world seems to promise him, and to exchange these visible joys for the prospect of an humble and mortified life. Nature seeks whatever flatters the senses; grace alone inspires the love for such things as elevate and ennoble the soul. The world cannot comprehend the holiness, virtue, devotedness, zeal and self-denial of the priest. As soon, however, as we realize that it is God's grace which calls men to the priesthood, all these mysteries become plain. We are no longer astonished when we see that the minister of the altar abhors the stains of vice and burns with a holy ardor for virtue. The charm that he finds even in the most painful duties seems quite natural. When we see him braving sickness and infection to console one of his flock, when we see him, after the example of the Good Shepherd, even giving his life for his sheep, we admire him, but we are not surprised, because we are convinced that the finger of God is there. The heavenly unction which fills the soul of the priest, renders sweet and easy his most irksome labors. The weight of his obligations, the bitterness of the insults which are often heaped upon him, the many annoyances to which he is subject, the fatigues of his ministry, the restlessness of his zeal, the privations of his poverty, all these yield to the sway which grace exercises over his heart, and serve only to increase his constancy and his merits. Nature knows nothing of such prodigies: God alone can work them in his ministers. The finger of God is there. *Dignitus Dei est hic.*

Let us bear in mind that God does not require wealth in those whom he designs to elevate to the apostolate. True he excluded neither the wealthy nor the great; but generally God seems to prefer the poor and the lowly. The Council of Trent says: "Pauperum filios præcipue eligi vult ad sacerdotium." (Sess, xxiii., De Reformat.) If there is anywhere in the humble hut of some poor laborer, at the corner of some obscure street, in some village hidden among mountains, or in the depths of the forest, some modest fireside guarded by purity and honesty, there it is that God so often deigns to select the guardian of his flock and to pour upon his brow that sacred unction which consecrates him as the prophet and the king of souls.

"I will raise me up a faithful priest, who shall do according to my heart and my soul and he shall walk all days before my anointed." (I. Kings ii, 35.)

"I chose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, and burn incense to me, and to wear the ephod before me."(I. Kings ii, 28.)

St. John the Evangelist tells us in his Gospel that St. Andrew and himself went one day to visit St. John the Baptist in the desert. On that occasion the Precursor beheld our divine Saviour approaching. He pointed to Jesus, saying: "Behold the Lamb of God." When St. Andrew and St. John heard these words they immediately followed the Saviour. (John i, 37.)

They walked reverently after our Lord. It is probable, says St. Chrysostom, that, being yet simple and uncultivated, they feared to approach Jesus, and kept at a distance through timidity and respect. (Hom. in Joann. C. I, 38.) But Jesus turned round and approached them. "What

seek you?" he asked. And they said: "Master, where dwellest thou?" By calling Jesus that name of Master they showed their desire to become his disciples. (John i, 38.)

But God does not wish us to solve so quickly the momentous question of our vocation; it is only after mature reflection that we should consecrate ourselves irrevocably to a fixed state of life. We must first be sure that God has called us to that state. "Come and see," says Jesus. They went, therefore, to the dwelling-place of our Lord; "they both stayed with him that day." (John i, 39.)

"But what had they then seen?" asks St. Augustine; "what had they discovered in Jesus? O disciples! Was it the human beauty of Jesus that attracted you? Ah, no! It was the divine beauty of Jesus alone that captured your hearts. It is the undying beauty of justice, of holiness, and of virtue—a beauty which the pure heart can always perceive and which attracts the soul in proportion to its purity." (De divers, Serm. xxvii. c. 6.)

Now St. John was pure. According to the common opinion of the doctors of the Church, he was at that time about twenty-five years of age. Christian artists generally represent him with the features of youth.

But it was another grace, more interior, rarer and entirely spiritual, which had drawn upon John the loving gaze of Jesus. All the Fathers declare and the entire Church proclaims "That John was a virgin." Under the reign of Tiberius, and in the land of Herod, in that pagan Galilee which was styled "Galilee of the Gentiles," full of every sensual delight and fascinating pleasure, John had remained a virgin.

We shall perhaps never fully understand in this life the great affinity which exists between the purity of man

and the inviolable perfections of that Being whom the angels are ever worshipping as "holy, holy, holy," beyond the ken of angels and men.

"Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." (Matt. v, 8.) These words have always been a never-ending compact between God and souls enamored of his divine beauty. The virgin disciple immediately followed Jesus through that attraction of virginity which is the law of time and the law of eternity. "In heaven," says St. John, "the virgins follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." (Apoc. xiv, 4.)

It is evening. "The disciples and the Master remained together the whole day," says St. John, which, after the manner of reckoning among the Hebrews, also includes the night. The night, therefore, continued the communications of the day. It was entirely passed, says St. Augustine, in the confidential conversations wherein St. John and his friend could penetrate the mystery of the kingdom of heaven.

"God first loved us," says St. John. Marvellous advances, mysterious attractions which are well known to those who have resolved to seek God in earnest and to give themselves entirely to him. In the burning ardor of youth they will attain the blessed gift of God himself. Jesus will say to them as he did to his disciples: "Come and see!" They will understand that the honor God bestows on them is great. They will bend their heads under the weight of holiness and glory; and they will accept tremblingly and lovingly the crown of the priesthood, which is interwoven with thorns and lilies, with holiness and sacrifice, and which stains the brow with blood only for love of men and for the glory of God.

CHAPTER VI.

Who are Called to the Priesthood.

God does not guide all souls in the same manner. There are many before whose view he opens out but one path; they find themselves on it of necessity and without choice. They are thus freed from all responsibility and perplexity in ascertaining the divine will. Their heavenly Father has himself put them upon the road which they should travel.

But there are others whom he seems to leave entirely to their guidance. He knows, indeed, the precise position of life in which he would have them serve him. His graces await them, and all is prepared along their path just as preparations are made along a road on which a prince is about to pass. But to ascertain the divine will is often an affair of great difficulty. When a youth makes his final choice of a state of life he knows that upon that act he stakes his happiness in this world and in the next. No wonder then that the choice of a state of life is regarded as a vital question. It is also the dividing line between the dependence of childhood and the responsibility of manhood. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that we make no mistake in the choice of a state of life, but above all things, no one should dare enter the ecclesiastical state unless clearly called thereto by God himself.

Now, there are certain marks by which one may

easily know whether he is called or not to the priesthood. These marks will be set forth in the present chapter. In another chapter we will speak of the signs by which we can tell when one is not called to the priesthood.

When a king levies soldiers to go to war, he must have weapons wherewith to arm them. It would be absurd to send soldiers to fight without arms. It would be simply to sacrifice his men to no purpose, and to invite defeat. Surely God acts with at least equal wisdom: "He does not call," says St. Bernardine of Sienna, "without giving, at the same time, to those whom he calls, all that is necessary to accomplish the end for which he calls them." (Serm. i, de St. Joseph.)

"Unusquisque," says St. Paul, "proprium donum habet. . . .alius quidem sic, alius vero sic." (I. Cor. vii, 7.) The meaning of this passage, according to St. Thomas and other commentators, is that the Lord gives to each one graces to fulfil with ease the obligations of the state of life to which he calls him. "Cuicumque datur," says the angelic doctor, "potentia aliqua divinitus, dantur omnia ea, per quæ executio illius possit congrue fieri." (Suppl., q. 33, a. 1.) In another place he writes: "Illos quos Deus ad aliquid eligit, ita præparat et disponit ut ad id ad quod eliguntur inveniantur indonei secundum illud (II. Cor, iii.): "Sufficientia nostra ex Deo est, qui et idoneos nos, fecit ministros novi testamenti." (3. q. 27, a. 4.)

If God, then, calls a young man to the ecclesiastical state, he gives him the physical, intellectual, and moral qualities necessary for that state of life; that is, God not only gives him the inclination, but he also endows him

with the ability to perform the duties of the priesthood.

With regard to *ability*, the physical constitution of the student should be such as to aid rather than prevent the development of his intellectual and moral qualities; and it should be sufficiently strong to endure the hardships of the life of a priest. The mind of the student should be strong so as to be able to apply to study and spiritual exercises without danger of being deranged. Weak minds are apt to be deranged by close mental application.

With regard to the intellectual faculties, the student need not have talents so brilliant and extraordinary as to make him a great genius; but he should have at least a sound, practical judgment; he should have at least good common-sense: "*Moins d'esprit, plus de jugement,*" as the French say. Neither great talents, nor zeal, and piety, can make up for want of judgment or common-sense. Students of average talents, yet gifted with sound, practical judgment, are generally best suited for the priesthood, because they are humble and docile. Men of superior talents, who have not at the same time a great desire to advance in virtue, are seldom fitted for the sanctuary. No solid virtue can take root in self-conceited and self-willed souls. Of course I do not mean to say that such persons should not be admitted; for, in time, and by the grace of God, they may greatly change; but I do say that great caution should be used in admitting them. They will undoubtedly overcome their self-conceit and stubbornness, if they are faithful in using the means which God has given them.

The moral qualities of the student must be such as to suit the sacerdotal life. The ecclesiastical student should be neither quarrelsome nor melancholy, but rather of a cheerful, happy, and affable disposition.

There are many young men whose physical, intellectual, and moral qualities would suit the priesthood; but these must have, morever, an *inclination* for the sacerdotal life. By inclination is meant a firm and constant will to serve God in this state of life and to labor for the salvation of souls. In many, the will is so inflamed with the love of the priesthood, that they overcome every obstacle thrown in their way. Their vocation is evident, and may be called extraordinary.

Those, for instance, whom God calls, like Moses, Samuel, or St. Paul, by making his presence sensible to them, or by speaking to them in human speech, can neither hesitate nor doubt; they must cry out with the prophet, when they hear the voice of God: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth," (I. Kings. iii, 10) or with the Apostle of the gentiles: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts ix, 6.) These, however, are rare cases.

In others, and, perhaps, in the greater part of those who are called to the priesthood, this love or inclination for this holy state is not so sensibly felt; but their understanding is so much enlightened by the grace of God, that they discover the inestimable treasures of the priesthood; they see that they can increase the glory of God; they see that they can save souls by the proper exercise of the priestly functions, and gain unspeakable happiness in heaven. As this kind of inclination is grounded on the light of reason and faith, it is less subject to error, and is more likely to last, than that which is founded on mere fervor of the will.

Now, in the opinion of experienced directors *the firm and constant will of a young man to serve God in the state of life to which he feels himself called, is the best mark of a divine*

vocation. But observe, that, if we say *a firm and constant will* of serving God, we do not say that a young man should, from the beginning, perform all that is required by his vocation, that he should be perfect at once, and never feel tempted, unsettled, and unshaken in his resolution, that he should never experience any doubts as to his vocation to the priesthood. Such doubts or indecision may come from the weakness and repugnance of nature, as also from the temptations of the devil. Every one is more or less subject to doubts, passions, and changes. We love one thing to-day, and another to-morrow. It is not by our natural feelings that we are to judge of the *firmness and constancy of our will.* We should consider, rather, whether amid these changeable feelings, our will remains firm and unshaken, so as not to give up the good which it has embraced. It is not a constancy of feeling that is required; but a constancy in the *superior part of the soul,* a constancy which is *effective.*

In order to know if you are called to the priesthood, it is not necessary to wait until God speaks to you in a sensible manner; it is not necessary that an angel from heaven should come and make God's will known to you; it is not necessary to have your vocation examined by ten or twelve divines, to ascertain whether the inspiration is good or evil, and whether or no you ought to follow it; you must carefully correspond with the first impulse of grace, and not feel distressed if coldness and repugnance arise concerning your vocation. If you are firm in your determination of seeking the good which is shown to you by the light of reason and grace, God will not fail to turn all things to his greater glory.

Young men with such dispositions may feel sure of

their divine vocation to the priesthood. To them may be applied the words of the Gospel: "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." (John xv, 16.)

Those who wish to enter the priesthood should remember, moreover, that their inclination must proceed from a pure intention. "We must enter the sanctuary by the door, says St. Alphonsus. Now, there is no other door than Jesus Christ. 'Ego sum ostium ovium . . . . Per me si quis introierit salvabitur.' (John x, 9.) To enter by the door is to become a priest, not to please relatives, nor to advance the family, nor for the sake of self-interest, or self-esteem, but in order to serve God, to increase his glory and to save souls."

There is a young man. He has an inclination to become a priest. He studies and devotes himself to the practice of piety. Under the influence of divine grace and the guidance of an able spiritual director, his pious resolution grows daily stronger. He meets with no obstacles to his project; he experiences no doubts about his vocation. Such a young man may be sure that his vocation is from God. His good behavior at college and under the paternal roof, the advice which he asks of his confessor, the purity of his intention, the courage and zeal with which he prosecutes his studies—all these are evident proofs that his vocation is from God.

There are besides these, still two other marks of a divine vocation: first, the desire of the people and the needs of the Church; and secondly, the decision of lawful superiors.

I. There is a saying, *Vox populi, Vox Dei,* and in many remarkable instances this proverb has been verified to the letter. History tells us that the people of

Milan, after the death of their Arian bishop, not being able to agree about the election of a new pastor, the prefect of the province sent one of his magistrates, named Ambrose, to appease the tumult and restore order. On sending Ambrose, the prefect said to him, "Act as a bishop, rather than as a judge." Ambrose obeyed. He spoke to the people with such unction, that he calmed their passions and inspired them with a desire for peace. While he was yet speaking, a child cried out, "Let Ambrose be bishop!" And the people, regarding the cry as an admonition from Heaven, cried out in turn, "Let Ambrose be bishop!" The emperor, informed of these circumstances, ratified the election of Ambrose, who thus became Bishop of Milan, and one of the lights of the Church.

We read in the life of St. Paulinus of Nola that while still young, he was forced by the people of Barcelona to receive the priesthood, and afterwards exercised it to the great edification of the whole Church.

St. John Chrysostom, who had constantly refused the charge of the episcopate, was led by a pious stratagem to accept it. He could not resist the will of God manifested in that of his people.

St. Gregory the Great, having taken to flight to escape the honors of the Papacy, Heaven itself betrayed his retreat by miraculous signs, and the great servant of God was obliged by the unanimous voice of clergy and people to accept the heavy burden.

In these and other like circumstances the will of God is manifested by the desires of the people, without leaving any doubt of its certainty.

II. We must also consider, as a certain sign of ecclesias-

tical vocation to the priesthood, the judgment of superiors, who have received from God a special grace to choose those who are to perpetuate the priesthood.

Our Divine Saviour chose from among his numerous disciples the twelve Apostles. The Gospel narrates with particular care the circumstances of this choice, in order to teach us that it was a divine act, the execution of which our Saviour reserved to himself. Our divine Saviour assures us of this remarkable fact: "You have not chosen me," said he to the Apostles, "but I have chosen you." (John xv, 16.) Our Heavenly Master wished to show us by this that his lawful successors, the bishops, should choose their clerics and priests, and transmit to them, in the name of Jesus Christ, whose place they hold, the powers and the divine mission of the priesthood.

In his letters to Timothy and Titus, St. Paul often recalls to his disciples, and consequently to all bishops, the rule they have to follow in the choice of God's ministers. He advises them not to raise neophytes to the priesthood, nor to impose hands with too great precipitation. He tells them the qualities that bishops and priests must possess to exercise worthily and with fruit the functions of the priesthood. We see that the Apostle is thoroughly penetrated with the importance of these elections which God directs by his spirit, but which he has left to the care of the rulers of his church. Bishops have always understood the importance of this duty. As judges of vocations they have always received and encouraged those who were led to the ecclesiastical state by the inspirations of the Holy Ghost; and they have driven from the sanctuary those who dared approach without being called by God.

The judgment of the bishops in the matter of ecclesiastical vocation is decisive. We may say that it serves to confirm all the other signs of vocation that we have enumerated. When the bishop calls, God calls; when the bishop refuses, it is God himself who refuses. The decision of the bishop is the surest mark. You cannot be mistaken if you follow his voice and accept his evidence.

CHAPTER VII.

Motives for Following the Divine Calling to a State of Perfection.

God is the beginning and end of all things. He has fixed the degrees of the angelic hierarchy in heaven. He has established the laws which govern the visible world. God has also created the moral world, the kingdom of his Son, the spiritual family which is preparing here below to reign one day in heaven.

As God assigns to each angel his peculiar mission and to each star its orbit in space, so, in like manner, he has marked out for each one of us the career which he must follow, in order to please the Lord and to acquire eternal happiness. If there exists in the world a being capable of disturbing, or of seconding the plans of God's Providence—that being is, certainly, *man*, who, endowed with reason and free will, placed between truth and falsehood, between good and evil, can resist as well as obey God; and, according to his fidelity or opposition, can become for his fellow-men either a subject of edification or a stumbling-block.

Now, it is certain that the good or bad behavior of men depends almost entirely on the state which they have embraced. If that state is the one assigned them by Providence as the one best suited to their character, their strength, and even their weaknesses, we may assert, as a rule, that they will lead virtuous lives. If, on the contrary, they embrace, through human motives, passion or

thoughtlessness, a state to which God does not call them, their lives will be blameworthy and evil. This is the idea of St. Gregory Nazianzen:—"For my part," says he, "I maintain that the choice of a state of life is so important as to decide, for the rest of our existence, the goodness or wickedness of our conduct." The choice of a state of life resembles, in certain respects, the vocation to the true faith, and even predestination. It decides for us a whole course of duties to be fulfilled; a long series of graces to be obtained—graces which are like a chain that binds us and draws us to heaven. If we keep hold of this chain, we are saved; if we let it go, we are lost. This truth is sometimes called in question by such as are not well informed.

The question has often been discussed whether one who is evidently called by God to a more perfect state of life, is bound in conscience to follow the divine calling. In order to prove that we are not strictly obliged to follow the vocation to a more perfect state of life, the words of our Lord are cited: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give it to the poor . . . and come follow me," (Matt. xix, 21) as also the words of the Apostle: "Now, concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord, but I give counsel . . . . I think that it is good for a man to be a virgin." (I. Cor. vii, 25.) From these passages some conclude that a life of perfection in the priesthood and in the religious state is always a matter of counsel and never of precept.

This reasoning is specious rather than sound. In the first place, we must except from this doctrine extraordinary vocations, such as that of St. Paul to the Apostleship, which was manifested by prodigies.

Secondly, we must hold it as certain that the obligation to follow one's vocation is stricter in proportion as God has manifested his will by extraordinary signs. Under certain circumstances the marks of a divine vocation are, for a Christian soul, equivalent to a rigorous precept. These marks are at times so evident that they leave no doubt whatsoever. After such marks of a divine vocation, it would be rash to believe that we may resist with impunity God's will, or reject without disobedience and without danger the graces which he offers and promises.

Moreover, there are certain souls of such a disposition that they cannot save themselves in the world; whilst they can find in the priesthood or in the religious state, sure and plentiful means of salvation. This is the opinion of St. Gregory the Great; a noteworthy opinion, of which we shall speak elsewhere.

Lastly, it may be that God has need of able and devoted pastors, men according to his own heart, for the service of his Church. Now he has the right to call such and to make use of them in accordance with his plans. To resist God when one is called to a mission so sublime and necessary is to offend him, to fail in an evident duty.

It is easy to support this argument by a comparison furnished us by the Gospel. There are certain good works which are of counsel rather than of precept. Our Saviour recommends good works to all the faithful. He does not enjoin them all absolutely on every one. Nevertheless, certain works which are of counsel for all, become of precept for those who need them as an indispensable means of regaining the grace of God and of leading a virtuous life. Fasting and penance, for example, unless prescribed by the Church, are merely of counsel,

and yet there are sinners who will never reach heaven without performing these good works. For such persons these works are not merely of counsel, but of obligation. Now, it is often the same with vocation to a more perfect state of life. This is especially the case whenever God's glory, the sanctification of souls, the welfare of the church, or the salvation of one thus called is involved, and this we must always suppose to be the case whenever God speaks and invites in a pressing and extraordinary manner.

Finally, it is certain that God absolutely rejects from the priesthood those who are either incapable or unworthy of this sublime ministry. This we see clearly from the canons of the church. Is it not then equally certain that God calls in the same absolute manner, though by ordinary means, the souls that he has selected for this state? Would God do more to keep away from the sanctuary those who are unfit and unworthy than to enrol and to consecrate to his service those whom he destines to be his representatives on earth? Who can believe that the empire of God, which governs all vocations, is less absolute over perfect vocations than over ordinary ones?

Now God imposes upon many the ordinary vocation of the Christian life. It is evident, therefore, that he also imposes on one or the other the vocation to a more perfect life.

Sacred History tells us how God punishes those who resist his merciful designs.

The Prophet Jonas, having disobeyed the order of God, through fear or some other unworthy motives, compromised the lives of all those who were sailing with him. This is a striking image of the misfortunes to which

we expose others by rejecting the call of Heaven. He was able to avert the danger which threatened the ship only by sacrificing himself and throwing himself into God's arms, thereby devoting himself to the accomplishment of the mission he had refused. Had not the prophet accepted at last the vocation which God imposed upon him, it is probable that he would have perished with all on board.

We have in the young man mentioned in the Gospel, another striking example of the manner in which God abandons those who draw back, when he calls them to a more perfect life. This young man came one day to our Divine Master and said: "Good Master, what good shall I do that I may have life everlasting?" Jesus answered: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." The young man replied: "All these have I kept from my youth; what is yet wanting to me?" Jesus said to him: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me." And when the young man had heard this word, he went away sad —for he had great possessions. Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Amen, I say to you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. xix, 16.) Every word of this history contains an important lesson. The young man presents himself to our Saviour. He has had, from his infancy, the most favorable dispositions to follow our Lord. He has observed all the commandments and he now feels the desire of doing more for God. The divine Master receives him kindly and evinces the most tender affection for him. Jesus shows him the more perfect life open before him, and invites

him to enter. But the young man lacks courage to part from his worldly goods, and goes away full of sadness, unable to make up his mind to follow the advice he had received. Strictly speaking, we might suppose that a young man, by rejecting the vocation of God and refusing to embrace a more perfect state of life, had not compromised his salvation. Our Saviour, however, draws a very different conclusion. How difficult, says he, for the rich men to enter the kingdom of heaven. As though he would say: Those who, like this unhappy man, reject the pressing invitation of Heaven for riches' sake, or who renounce their vocation through attachment to this world, will never reach the port of salvation. It is thus that the Fathers of the Church have understood our Saviour's words. What a terrible lesson for cowardly souls! What a powerful motive to give ourselves to God when he calls us!

When we think of the gravity of such a refusal, and count the many sins it involves, we cannot be astonished at the terrible consequences which the Gospel attributes to it. God calls us as a counsellor and friend. Hence such a refusal involves an act of great temerity, because in resisting the call of God we prefer our own lights to the all-wise will of God. God calls us as Creator and Sovereign. Hence such a refusal involves grievous injustice, because we fail to consecrate to him a life of which he has a perfect right to dispose. God calls us also as Legislator: consequently to refuse him is to be guilty of disobedience, for it is violating a law, a formal precept imposed by himself. Finally, God calls us as a Father and Benefactor; and consequently, to refuse him is to be guilty of the blackest ingratitude; it is to

refuse to give back to God that which we have received from him. Vocation to the ecclesiastical state is a sign of God's predilection. He who is called to the priesthood should imagine that he hears our Divine Saviour saying to him,as he did to Peter: "Lovest thou me?" (John xxi, 16.) And he who rejects this vocation really answers: "No, Lord, I love thee not."

All that we are, all that we possess in the order of nature, as in the order of grace, comes to us from God. Now, in inviting us to the priesthood, God asks of us a thousand times less than he has done for us; and in turn for our offering, or our sacrifice, he offers us again unnumbered graces, a hundred means of salvation which ordinary Christians never enjoy in the world. By refusing to obey the call of God, we show that we are unwilling to do anything for him. Such a refusal is the height of ingratitude, it is a selfishness that must wound him to the heart.

Excuses are never wanting to cowardly souls who refuse to obey the call of God; but remember, such excuses may sometimes deceive men, they cannot deceive God. Some plead as an excuse the love of their parents, attachment to riches, weakness, the burdens of the priesthood and so on; but before God all these excuses are nothing. Love of parents is certainly most lawful; God himself enjoins it: but God also wills that this love should be subordinate to the love which is due to himself. "He that loveth father or mother more than me," he says in his Gospel, "is not worthy of me." (Matt. x, 37.) "Since we are bound to love even our enemies," says St. Gregory the Great, "how comes it that under certain circumstances we must hate our neighbors? In this

sense," replies the old doctor, "that we must love our parents and cherish our neighbors, so long as they aid us in the practice of virtue, and that we must leave them and fly from them as soon as they lead us to evil, or impede us in doing the good that God requires of us." (Hom. 37, on Luke xiv, 26.) Supposing you have clearly a divine vocation, then follow the advice which St. Jerome gives to Heliodorus: "Even if your little grandson clings to your neck: even if your tender mother, with garments rent and hair dishevelled, shows you the breast that you suckled; even if your father throws himself on the ground to bar your passage; step over your father's body, and fly, without shedding a tear, to the standard of the cross. It is an act of true piety to be cruel in such circumstances." (St. Jerome, Ep. xiv. 2 to Heliodorus; vol. i., col. 29, ed Vallarsi.) St. Fulgentius entered a monastery and gave himself to God, in spite of the tears, groans and supplications of his mother. St. Frances of Chantal stepped over the body of her son who, in order to stop her, had lain down on the threshold. St. Stanislas Kostka left his father's house, despite the refusal and resistance of his father, and gave himself to God. See what the saints have done. See what he must do who wishes to save his soul when God calls him to his service.

Is it not true that we belonged to God before belonging to our parents, and that we belong to him on more titles than we do to those who have given us life? Our parents themselves belong to God, and when we consecrate ourselves to him, we only give back to him what our parents have received from his goodness. If God calls us we should bear in mind that, if we have a father on earth,

we have also a father in heaven. The rights of our Heavenly Father have a vast preference over those of our family; these can never have the right to compromise our eternity. What would it profit our parents to have given us the life of the body, if by a misplaced affection we were to cause the death of our soul? Attachment to one's family is a natural, lawful and even necessary feeling, but it is always essentially subordinate to the love of God.

Others neglect to follow the call of God on account of the riches, pleasures and comforts of life.

I ask: Are we then made for these things? How long shall we possess them? A few years, a few weeks, perhaps only a few days! And are we to sacrifice our salvation for the sake of these trifles? Have we forgotten those striking words of our Saviour: "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul? Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul?" (Matt. xvi, 26.) "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" (Mark x, 23.) Our Lord does not apply these words to all rich men, but only to those who are attached to the goods of earth as to their sovereign happiness and the last end only; to such as prefer their riches to the commandments of God and to the bliss of heaven. Tremble, therefore, if you are resisting the voice of grace for the sake of riches, or through attachment to the goods of earth!

You speak of the comforts of life; but God speaks to you of his afflicted Church, and invites you to labor in his vineyard. He speaks to you of heaven, where a splendid crown awaits you. Reflect, then, once for all,

on the shortness of this life, whose comforts you seek. Think of the nearness of death, the uncertainty of the goods of fortune, the void they leave in the soul when we cleave to them. Compare the frail and fleeting advantages which they offer you with the privilege of consecrating yourself to the service of God and meriting an immense glory and an endless happiness. When I see a young man truly called of God hesitating to follow his vocation, I seem to hear again the reproach which God addressed to his ungrateful and unfaithful people: "They set at naught the desirable land:" (Ps. cv, 24.) They have despised my most precious gifts.

But you say I am weak and frail: how can I, a poor reed, bear a burden that would appear terrible to the very angels? You are weak and frail of yourself, I grant it; but you are powerful in him who strengthens you. This God of truth has said that his yoke is sweet and his burden light. And why? Because he has given to each one the helps he needs to fulfil his duties. God tempts no man above his strength, but grants to each the means of carrying the burden he imposes on him. When our Lord called his Apostles to preach the Gospel, were they very strong, very perfect? When he sent them to conquer the world, were they more valiant, were they stronger than you are? Had they not their defects and their weaknesses? Could they not have objected to their sacred vocation a thousand excuses more specious than yours? Their ignorance, their rudeness, their poor and toilsome life. Did they not appear even to impede their sublime calling? No; as soon as our Saviour spoke to them, "they immediately, leaving their nets, followed him." (Mat. iv, 20.) Their divine Master was then

leading an obscure life. He was persecuted, threatened and calumniated by the doctors of the Synagogue. Yet nothing stopped his disciples. As soon as he had manfested to them the divine will, they followed him without hesitation, and the event proved how powerful the grace of vocation made them. Notwithstanding their ignorance, grossness and poverty, they confounded the wise, they converted the most refined nations, and they inspired the wealthiest families with a contempt for riches. Let their example be a lesson to you. The Apostles followed our Divine Saviour when he was despised by men and possessed no other attraction than that of his grace. Now he has risen from the tomb; he has ascended in glory to heaven, where he reigns at his Father's right hand, destined to put all his enemies one day beneath his feet: and will you now hesitate to follow him to obey his voice? You see that he has chosen the weak to confound the strong, that he has sent his disciples as lambs in the midst of wolves, and that by their ministry he has changed the wolves into lambs. Are you still afraid because of your weakness? Your fear would have some excuse if you had to reckon on your own individual strength, but Jesus declares that he himself will be your strength and your stay.

When God calls, he himself, says St. Leo, gives the necessary helps: "Qui mihi honoris est auctor, ipse mihi fiet administrationum adjutor; dabit virtutem, qui contulit dignitatem! (Serm. 1. in die Assumpt. suae.)

This is what our Lord himself has said: "Ego sum ostium. Per me si quis introierit, ingredietur, et egredietur, et pascua inveniet." (John x, 9.)

Ingredietur: What the priest who is called by God

undertakes, he will easily accomplish without sin and with great merit.

Et egredietur: He may live amidst perils and occasions of sin; but, with the help of God, he will easily escape every snare.

Et pascua inveniet: Living in the state of life to which God has called him, he will be assisted in all the duties of his ministry by special graces which will help him to advance in perfection. He can therefore say with confidence. "Dominus regit me, et nihil mihi deerit, in loco pascuæ me collocavit." (Ps. xxii, 2.)

If our Lord caused Peter to walk on the water, can he not guard and uphold your footsteps in the path to which he calls you? Confide, therefore, in him, whilst mistrusting yourself, and henceforward fear nothing. As long as our Lord fights with you, the powers of hell shall never triumph over your weakness. Be assured that these doubts and fears are only snares which the devil lays to withdraw you from the sanctuary wherein you can work efficaciously for God's glory and the welfare of souls. Despise the cowardly suggestions of the devil and throw yourself into your Saviour's arms. As soon as you have firmly resolved to follow the voice of God, the phantoms which have pursued and terrified you will vanish like smoke that is scattered by the wind. You will cry out with the Prophet David, "How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!" (Ps. lxxxviii, 2.) "One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life." (Ps. xxvi, 4.) Better is one day in Thy courts above thousands . . . in the tabernacle of sinners." (Ps. lxxxiii, 11.) No one, O Lord, who has resisted

thee hath found peace; come, then, into my heart and reign therein forever, for thine I am in life and in death.

If there are some who enter the priesthood without vocation, there are unhappily others who resist God's voice and refuse the burden which Jesus desires to lay upon them. The Church suffers no less from the resistance of cowardly souls than from the rashness of those presumptuous wretches who are not called. St. Chrysostom, after weighing the wrongs that both these classes do to God, assures us that it is probably more dangerous to reject the call to the ecclesiastical state than to enter that state without a vocation. This opinion seems reasonable; for he who usurps the priesthood without vocation, thrusts himself into functions that should not be intrusted to him and occupies himself with a ministry for which he was not destined; while he who refuses the priesthood when God calls him thereto, abandons functions that are destined for him, and leaves a gap in the ranks of the sacred hierarchy. By going away from the fold over which God wishes him to watch, he leaves open one of these entrances by which the wolves will probably find their way to the fold in order to scatter and devour it. On the one hand there is pride and temerity; and on the other weakness and ingratitude, besides a disobedience which in some cases may reach to a very high degree of gravity.

We must, therefore, be persuaded, says St. Gregory, that our eternal salvation depends principally on our embracing the state of life to which God has called us. It is God who destines the state of life for every one and in that state God gives him abundant graces and suitable helps. Hence St. Paul says: "Quos praedestinavit, hos et vo-

cavit; et quos vocavit, hos et justificavit, etc., illos et glorificavit. (Rom. viii, 30.)

To vocation succeeds justification, and to justification, glory, that is, the attainment of eternal life. He, therefore, who does not obey the call of God, shall neither be justified nor glorified. Father Granada justly said that vocation is the main-spring of our entire life. If the main-spring in a watch is spoiled, the whole watch is out of order. In like manner, says St. Gregory Nazianzen, if a person does not follow his vocation, his whole life will be full of faults. If he enters the state to which God has not called him, he will be deprived of many means of sanctification which God had in store for him in the state of life to which he was called.

CHAPTER VIII.

How the Ecclesiastical Student Should Preserve the Grace of Vocation.

In order to become a good, efficient priest, it is not enough to have a divine vocation to the priesthood. Those who are called must also faithfully correspond to their calling by preparing themselves diligently for the worthy reception of holy orders. Let them consider well the high dignity to which they are called. The priesthood is the highest dignity on earth. Innocent III says, "that the priest is placed between God and man; that he is less than God, but more than man." This dignity supposes, besides the divine vocation, positive holiness of life; that is to say, whosoever intends to embrace the ecclesiastical state must not only be free from mortal sin, but he must also be enriched with every virtue. The Church, during eleven centuries, excluded from this holy state every one who had committed even one mortal sin after baptism. If any one, after having received holy orders, fell into mortal sin, he was deposed forever from his sacred office, for the simple reason that he who is not holy should not touch what is holy.

By a decree of Innocent III, the impure priest was suspended; St. Gregory condemned the immoral priest to a penance of ten years, during three of which he had to sleep on the bare ground, cut off from all society, in complete solitude, and even deprived of Holy Communion.

After the three years were passed he had yet to fast one year and a half on bread and water. During the remaining years he had to fast at least three days in the week.

This severe discipline of the Church has, it is true, been greatly mitigated; but it has always been required that he who had in his past life become guilty of grievous sins, and who desired to receive holy orders, should first lead a pure life for some time previous to his ordination. "He must have," says St. Alphonsus, "bonitatem positivam et specialem." (Hom. Apost. No. 16.) He must be free from habitual sin, at least several months before his ordination, (as Pope Benedict XIV teaches in his Syn. Dioc. 11.) The Church proclaims a universal fast of three days and orders special prayers when she admits candidates to the priesthood. She asks the faithful, she asks those who propose the candidates for ordination, the grand question: "Scis illos esse dignos?"

The Church says. "Scisne," not "putas." She wishes to be certain that they are worthy.

The dignity of the priesthood is so exalted, so sublime, that it can be understood only in heaven. The higher it is, however, the deeper and more solid should be its foundation; that is, the greater should be the holiness and innocence of him who chooses that holy state. "Cui multum datum est multum requiretur ab eo." These are the words of our Lord and these words he explained in the parable of the talents.

"Posui vos, ut eatis, et multum fructum afferatis." (John xv. 16.) I have appointed you to go and bring forth much fruit, and that your fruit should remain. If God requires ordinary Christians to bring forth fruit thirty-fold and even sixty-fold, assuredly he requires those who enter

the ecclesiastical state to bring forth a hundred-fold. From all this it follows that it would be a mortal sin to receive any of the holy orders, while still addicted to a sinful habit. "If I consider your vocation," says St. Bernard, "I am seized with horror, especially if I see that no true penance has preceded your ordination."

Jesus Christ does not wish to intrust so complete a power over his own virginal body and over his mystic body the faithful, except to those who, by his grace, have gained power over their own bodies. Can he, who is unfaithful in that which is less, be faithful in that which is greater? Should not he who would bring into subjection the passions of others, be first master of his own passions: "If, then, you have not been faithful in the unjust mammon, who will trust you with that which is the true?" (Luke xvi, 11.) He, therefore, who is called to the priesthood, must make his body a holocaust of chastity, modesty, and in fact of every virtue.

Many of the saints would never consent to receive holy orders. St. Francis of Assisi once beheld, in a vision, a crystal vase filled with most limpid water. God revealed to him that the soul of a priest must be as pure as this crystal vase. This vision made such a deep impression upon him, that he could never afterwards be prevailed upon to accept the dignity of the priesthood.

The holy Pontiff St. Gregory required that those who aspired to the priesthood should lead pure lives for several years previous to their ordination. "Ne unquam ii qui ordinati sunt pereant, prius aspiciatur si vita eorum continens ab annis plurimis fuit." (Lib. I. Epist. 42.) From this we may infer that God will demand a terrible account of the priest who gives to those aspiring to the

priesthood a testimony of their having frequented the sacraments and led exemplary lives, when he knows they have, on the contrary, neglected the sacraments and have given bad example. Such priests, by these false testimonials, render themselves guilty of all the sins which may be afterwards committed by the unworthy priests who were ordained in consequence of these testimonials. The bishops usually trust to the testimony of parish priests. In giving such testimonials a parish priest should not trust to the testimony of others. He cannot give such testimonials unless he is certain that what he attests is true, namely, that the ecclesiastical student has really led an exemplary life and has frequented the sacraments. And a bishop cannot ordain any one who is not a man of approved chastity. So the confessor cannot permit an incontinent penitent to receive ordination unless he has a moral certainty that such a one is free from the bad habit which he had contracted, and that he has acquired the virtue of chastity. (St. Alphonsus, Selva. p. 130, No. 10.)

Whoever, therefore, wishes to receive holy orders worthily, must necessarily lead a virtuous life. According to St. Thomas Aquinas, a priest must be possessed of greater interior holiness than even a religious, on account of the holy and sublime functions of the sacred ministry, and especially because the priest has to offer up so often the most august sacrifice of the Mass.

"Homo, qui habuerit maculam, non offeret panes Deo suo." (Lev. xxi, 6, 17.) In the Old Law, no one was allowed to offer sacrifice, if he was defiled by any stain, or was blind, or lame, or leprous. Now, if in the Old Law God excluded from the priesthood all who were lame or blind, or bodily deformed, how much more does God

abhor, in the New Law, those whose souls are deformed and defiled by sin? In the Old Law the priests offered only mere bread. In the New Law, the priests offer the living Bread from heaven—the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. How, then, shall he dare touch and handle and sacrifice the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ—he who is spiritually blind, who wilfully closes his eyes to the light, who refuses to acknowledge his faults, though every one else notices them? How shall he dare offer up the Body and Blood of Jesus—he who is lame, who makes no progress, no efforts even to advance in virtue, no spiritual reading, no meditation? How shall he dare offer the precious Body and Blood of Jesus—he whose soul is defiled by the leprosy of sin and sinful habits? "Talis non accedat ad altare," says God again, "quia maculam habet, et contaminare non debet sanctuarium meum." (Lev. xxi, 23,) "Recedite, recedite, exite de medio ejus," says God elsewhere by his prophet, "mundamini, qui fertis vasa Domini." (Isai. lii, 11.)

The Abbot Theodore had received the order of deacon. One day he beheld a fiery column, and heard, at the same time, a voice, saying: "If thy heart be as fiery as this column, thou mayest exercise the functions of thy sacred order." He would never afterward consent to exercise these sacred functions. Every one, even the most perverse, feels naturally that the candidate for the priesthood should be holy: the least fault in him is considered unpardonable.

"I have appointed you," says our Lord Jesus Christ, "that you should go and should bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." (John xv, 16.) Now, the ecclesiastical student will not bring forth this fruit, that

is to say, holiness of life, unless he seriously endeavors, in the course of his studies, to sanctify himself. Let him not imagine that sanctity will be infused into his soul by the sacrament of holy orders. Let him rest assured that, if he is not a virtuous student, he will never be a virtuous priest. A light-minded student will be a light-minded priest; a proud, immortified, and sensual student will make a proud, immortified, and sensual priest.

It is true, you must study to acquire the necessary science, without which you would be unfit for the sacred ministry. But, remember it is not learning, but purity of life, that will qualify you for the priesthood. A certain author says, "that those who know that their hearts are enslaved by sinful habits, and still dare receive holy orders, should be led to a place of execution rather than to the Church of God." It is not enough for the candidate for the priesthood to be free from sin; he must, moreover, have led a pious life, and have acquired a certain facility in the practice of virtue. Should a candidate for any of the holy orders be addicted to some sinful habit at the time of his ordination, he is, according to the opinion of theologians, unworthy to receive even the sacrament of penance, even though he should otherwise be properly disposed. In order to receive the sacrament of penance worthily at such a time, he must also be properly disposed to receive that of holy orders. A confessor, who knowingly and wilfully would absolve such a candidate, would thereby become guilty of mortal sin. Moreover, should the confessor give this young candidate a good testimonial, so that he would, on that account, be promoted to holy orders, such a confessor, as we have said, would become answerable for all the sins com-

mitted by this unworthy priest during the whole course of his ministry.

I do not fear so much that ecclesiastical students will fail to acquire sufficient knowledge, but I fear very much that many will not acquire sufficient holiness of life before receiving holy orders. I have always observed that the greater number of ecclesiastical students make great efforts to acquire sufficient knowledge; but few, indeed, are those who earnestly strive to lead a holy life. The natural ambition to appear learned before others, and the thought that they will have to preach one day in presence of heretics and unbelievers, induce them to make every exertion to learn how to refute every error, and to defend the truths of our holy religion. Such students apply themselves so seriously to their studies, that their mind is altogether taken up with them. This is especially the case when they consider the actual state of society, and the infidel and immoral principles that prevail everywhere. It is, indeed, only too true that we live in a most anti-Christian age. Principles are disregarded, and iniquity is held in veneration. We see nothing but confusion in religion, in government, in the family circle. Sects spring up and swarm like locusts, destroying not only revealed religion, but rejecting even the law of nature. Fraud, theft, and robbery are practised almost as a common trade. The press justifies rebellion, secret societies, and plots for the overthrow of established governments. The civil law, by granting divorce, has broken the family tie. Children are allowed to grow up in ignorance of true religious principles. Their fathers being without religion, or given up to the most detestable vices, and their mothers destitute of virtue, and infected in the highest degree with

the spirit of vanity, the natural consequence is that these children are regardless of their parents. The number of apostates is on the increase, at least among the younger generation. Immoral and infidel tracts circulate freely. Daily journals, weekly magazines, the great organs of public opinion, become more unchristian every day; so that no one who has at heart the morality of his fellow-men can, with propriety, recommend them for perusal: and yet how eagerly are these vile publications sought for and devoured by the majority of men!

Such diseases of the human mind and heart, the student says, require a remedy. To counteract and heal them, he says, will require great learning and experience, and consequently, a thorough and earnest study of philosophy and theology will be absolutely necessary. But here lies the stumbling-block for the greater number of students: they endeavor to cultivate the mind rather than the heart. They are more desirous to fill their mind with the principles of philosophy and other profane sciences, than with the principles of Jesus Christ and his saints. They care more to know their lessons well than to make a good meditation. They take more pains to appear well prepared before their professors and school-mates than before Jesus Christ in Communion. They make greater efforts to compose a good discourse than to make a good examination of conscience. They make greater efforts to acquire a reputation for learning than they do to acquire the virtues of humility and sincere charity. They are more pleased with the praises of the world than with the good pleasure of Jesus Christ. Clearness in reasoning, and ability in delivering a learned discourse, is, in their opinion, of more importance than

the spirit of meekness, condescension, and submission in all their words and actions. Such students often take more pleasure in reading profane and frivolous books, than books that nourish piety and inspire love for solitude and prayer. In a word, they make greater efforts to acquire the wisdom of the world than that of Jesus Christ and his saints. Thus, study, instead of uniting them more closely with God, only separates them farther from him.

I do not, by any means, wish to blame the students for applying themselves to study. What I blame in them is the manner in which they apply themselves.

Learning can do much good, it is true; but however much it may accomplish, experience teaches us, in the present as in the past, that moral evils never yield to any other force than the grace of God. A learned man may enlighten the minds of his fellow-men, and expel their darkness and errors; but, unless the grace of God touch their hearts, they will not embrace the truth. "It is not philosophy," wrote St. Vincent de Paul to one of his priests, "nor theology, nor eloquence alone, that moves the soul." This truth was felt most keenly by St. Bernard whilst at Paris, 1123. He had scarcely arrived at the capital, when he was pressed to deliver a discourse at the Academy of Philosophy and Theology. He yielded to the invitation, and, having to speak before a numerous assembly, he prepared himself with care, and pronounced a learned dissertation on the most sublime questions of philosophy; but when he had finished his discourse, the audience remained cold and unmoved.

Alas! there are but too many who imitate St. Bernard in this point. Like him, they, too, know how to prepare

very learned discourses; they use the most eloquent language. They may, indeed, enlighten the mind, but they do not reach the heart. The only fruits their sermons produce are a few unmeaning flatteries, which serve only to nourish their pride and self-love. "What a magnificent sermon!" the people will say. "What an eloquent speaker! What profound knowledge! What a clear mind! What a fascinating preacher! What a pleasure it is to listen to such a man! I never had such a treat in my life!" Would to God these preachers would imitate St. Bernard in his preparation for his second discourse! How different would be the fruit of their labors! When this saint had finished his first discourse, and saw that his audience remained cold and unmoved, he withdrew in sadness and confusion; he shut himself up in an oratory, where he sighed and wept abundantly before God. On the morrow, St. Bernard presented himself again to the same school: "But this time," says the author of the Exordium of Citeaux, "the Holy Ghost spoke by his mouth, and guided his lips; and the admirable discourse which he pronounced made such an impression, that many ecclesiastics, being deeply moved by it, placed themselves under his direction, and followed him to Clairvaux, there to serve God under his guidance."

It is related, in the life of this saint, that mothers used to keep their children, wives their husbands, and friends their friends, from listening to him, because the Holy Ghost gave so great a power to his words, that no one could resist them; every one felt inspired to follow him, or at least to lead a better life.

Let us hear what the saints say in reference to mere

worldly wisdom. "You must consider," says St. Vincent de Paul, "that learning without humility has always done great harm to the Church; that pride has always brought the greater part of learned men, like the rebellious angels, to everlasting perdition. God does not need learned men to carry out his wise designs. Generally speaking, he makes use of the simple to convert men, and to procure the welfare of his Church. This we see in the case of the Apostles, and, in later times, in the case of St. Catharine of Sienna and of St. Teresa:" and, I may add, in our own days, of the Curé of Ars, in France. St. Ignatius Loyola says: "It is of greater importance for the students to advance in virtue than in science; if they cannot do both at the same time, virtue must have the preference: *Minus scientiæ, plus virtutis.*" (Life, by C. Genelli).

St. Francis of Assisi said to those who wished to enter his order, who had already completed their course of studies, and wished to apply themselves solely to the study of Holy Scripture: "I am well pleased with such, provided, according to the example of Jesus Christ, who seems to have devoted more time to prayer than to anything else, they do not neglect the exercise of prayer, and endeavor rather to practise what they have learned than to learn new things, which they will probably never practise. The truths of the Gospel are better understood by those who practise them than by those who know them, but neglect to put them into practice. A man possesses knowledge and eloquence only in proportion as he practises what he knows and teaches. Many think they will find happiness in acquiring great learning; but truly happy is he alone who knows Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

Studies, undertaken with a view to gain the applause of men, were always an abomination in the eyes of this great saint. He used to say of these vain men, that, on the day of retribution, they would find their hands empty. He said that we should rather strive to acquire solid virtue and advance in the grace of God; for the time will come when books and worldly learning will be rejected as useless. Let those, therefore, who aspire to the priesthood, earnestly endeavor to acquire the virtues of humility, simplicity, prayer, and the love of holy poverty. This is the only sure way of edifying our neighbor, and of procuring his salvation. We are called to imitate Jesus Christ, who did not point out to us any other road to heaven. Many abandon these virtues, under the specious pretext of edifying their neighbor by their learning. They are greatly deceived, however, if they imagine that, by great learning alone, they can fill the hearts of their fellow-men with light, devotion, and love for God. Learning only puffs up such vain men, and extinguishes the love of God in their hearts. Hence it usually comes to pass that, after having wasted their time in useless studies, instead of striving to live up to the spirit of their vocation, they at last find themselves incapable of returning to their original fervor.

Father John de Starchia, Provincial of the Friars Minors in Lombardy, having been upbraided in vain by St. Francis of Assisi for introducing an excessive application to study, and making regulations more promotive of science than of piety, was publicly cursed by this saint, and deposed at the ensuing chapter. The saint, on being entreated to withdraw this curse, and give his blessing to brother John, who was a learned nobleman,

answered: "I cannot bless him whom the Lord has cursed:" a dreadful reply, which was soon after verified. This unfortunate man died exclaiming, "I am damned and cursed for all eternity." Some frightful circumstances, which took place after his death, confirmed this fearful prediction.

St. Francis was by no means averse to the acquisition of learning. On the contrary, he exhorted those of his brethren whose duty it was to teach, to apply themselves diligently to study. But he never ceased to oppose that vain and worldly wisdom which is always without devotion, and which preaches itself instead of Jesus Christ crucified. He often repeated these words of Holy Writ: "Many will say to me at that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and cast out devils in thy name, and worked many miracles in thy name? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity." (Matt. vii, 22).

St. Francis knew full well that man is naturally more inclined to learn the truth than to practise it, and that virtue, which purifies the soul, is far more precious and far more necessary than that learning which merely enlightens the mind.

St. Alphonsus speaks in the same manner: "The Apostle St. Paul," says he, "wrote of the world's wisdom: 'Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. If any man think he knoweth anything, he hath not yet known as he ought to know.' (1 Cor. vii, 1.) Knowledge, united to the love of God, is most useful to us and to our neighbor; but if charity does not accompany this knowledge it does us much harm, by making us proud, and leading us to despise others. 'The Lord is merciful to the hum-

ble, but he resisteth the proud.' Happy is the man to whom God has given the science of the saints. This science he gave to the righteous Abel, upon whom Holy Scripture assures us, 'he bestowed the knowledge of the holy things.' (Wisd. x, 10.) The Holy Spirit speaks of the science of the saints as being the greatest of all gifts. How many do we see who are puffed up on account of their knowledge of mathematics, philology, archæology, and philosophy! But what does religion gain by their knowledge? What gain do so many learned men derive from all their knowledge, if they have not yet even learned how to love God and to practise virtue? The Lord refuses his light to those wise ones of the world who labor only to gain the applause of men; he grants his gifts only to the pure and simple of heart. 'I confess to thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth,' says our divine Saviour, 'because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to the little ones.' (Matt. xi, 25.) 'Happy is he,' says St. Augustine, 'who knows God, his greatness and his goodness, though he be ignorant of all besides: for he who knows God cannot help loving him. Now, he who loves God is wiser than all the learned of the earth who know not how to love him. The ignorant arise and win heaven.' How many ignorant people, how many poor peasants, sanctify themselves daily, and gain eternal life! St. Paul writes to the Corinthians: 'I judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.' Happy are we if we acquire the knowledge of Jesus Christ, of the love he has shown us on the cross!

"We must study, it is true, because we are laborers;

but we ought to be fully convinced that the one thing needful, the one thing which Jesus Christ requires above everything else, is, that we should strive to become saints. We must study, but the sole object of our studies ought to be to please God; otherwise these studies will cause us to remain only longer in purgatory, nay, may even cause some of us—which may God forbid!—to be cast in the everlasting flames of hell. Let your aim, then, always be the glory of God and the salvation of souls; and when an opportunity of appearing ignorant occurs, do not recoil from it."

St. Alphonsus wrote to his students, after the departure of a certain professor, who had introduced among them an excessive application to study: "I am not sorry when I see you retrench your studies, and give more time to prayer. We have been called to succor those who are poor and abandoned. We have therefore more need of sanctity than of science. If we are not holy, we are exposed to the danger of falling into a thousand imperfections. I repeat it once more, if you retrench your studies somewhat in order to apply yourselves more diligently to prayer, far from being sorry, I shall, on the contrary, feel greatly consoled." (Life, by Father Tanoja, vol. v, p. 34.)

An ecclesiastical student, therefore, must bear in mind that knowledge without the love of God is nothing but "sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal:" "If I speak the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." (1 Cor. xiii, 1.) The venerable Father Alvarez, S. J., took all possible care that study should not weaken the piety of the students under his charge. To succeed in this, he adopted the following means:—

Above all, he inculcated on the students such striking truths as these: "Virtue and knowledge are the two trees planted by God in paradise; they are the two great luminaries created by God to give light to the world; they are the two Testaments, the Old and New; they are the two sisters, Martha and Mary, living under one roof in great union and harmony, and supporting each other. Holiness gives to knowledge authority and solidity. The Apostle St. Paul writes to his disciple Timothy: 'Take heed to thyself and to doctrine; for, in doing this, thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee.'" (Tim. iv, 16.) Commenting on this advice of St. Paul, Father Alvarez says: "We acquire knowledge in proportion as we endeavor to acquire virtue. Who is there that does not know that knowledge is a gift of God, and that God bestows this gift upon us in proportion as we purify our hearts? An ecclesiastical student, then, should make greater efforts to avoid sin and correct his faults, than to study learned authors and to peruse many books."

This zealous director of souls was also very careful to inspire the students with love of mortification, as a powerful means to make them advance both in perfection and science. "Some will ask," says he, "how can mortification be a means of advancing in science? All I answer is, try it, and you will experience that there is nothing that removes all difficulties more surely than mortification. By the practice of mortification you will easily overcome the inordinate desire to study while you are engaged in prayer. Mortification will teach you to overcome your pride, when you feel offended at some question of the professor, or at the objections of your

fellow-students. Mortification will induce you to apply yourselves only to such branches of science as are assigned to you, and to learn only what is useful, and not what nourishes curiosity. If you love mortification, you will prefer the views of your professor to your own, that is, provided they are not evidently against faith and morals. This was the advice of St. Augustine, who says: 'That student knows much who knows how to profit by the teachings of his professor.' As the professor is gifted with knowledge, so must the student be endowed with docility. It belongs to the professor to judge what is fit for the student and to point out the studies best calculated to cultivate his mind.

"The spirit of mortification will prevent you from boasting of your knowledge before others. It will teach you to study diligently, and to overcome all dislike and weariness in your studies. It will enable you to study without too great haste. There is no greater obstacle to the acquisition of solid science than over-great haste in studying. This over-great haste will cause you to study everything superficially. As discretion is a virtue, so is too great eagerness a fault which must be avoided: *Sapere et sapere ad sobrietatem!* The spirit of mortification will enable you to overcome that foolish shame which you may feel in asking for an explanation when you are in doubt. It will also teach you to be diligent in taking notes of whatever you may find of utility in the books which you read, or in the observation of your professor: '*Multa scribendo didici*,' says St. Augustine. It will keep you from reading books which are forbidden by your professor, and which would only take away your mind from your study. 'To study well,' says St. Bernard, 'we must know the true

end for which we study. We must not study in order to nourish our vainglory or to gratify our curiosity; but we must study in order to sanctify ourselves, and to edify our neighbor. There are some who wish to know merely for the sake of knowing: this is detestable curiosity. Others wish to know in order to become known: this is execrable vanity. Others, again, study in order to sell their science: this is filthy lucre. But there are others who study in order to be able to edify their fellow-men: this is charity. Others, again, study in order to edify themselves: this is wisdom. The two latter classes of students alone do not abuse knowledge; for they study only to do good.'" (Serm. 26, in Cant.)

Father Alvarez also made every effort to inspire the students with a great love for prayer, as he knew by his own experience, that it is a most efficacious means of making rapid progress in science and in virtue. His modesty would not allow him to speak of himself; hence, he used to cite to his students the example of the Abbot Theodore, who, as Cassian assures us, had acquired great learning, more by assiduous application to prayer, and by purifying his heart, than by studying many books. One day this holy abbot, wishing to find out the meaning of a certain passage of Holy Scripture, began to study diligently; but all his efforts were in vain. At last he commenced to pray for light, and instantly he understood its meaning. (Life of Father Alvarez.)

St. Thomas Aquinas confessed publicly, that he owed his wisdom more to prayer than to his efforts in studying. There are numerous examples of this kind to be found in the lives of the Fathers of the Desert. In our own time we have, in the Curé of Ars, a most striking proof of the

wonderful power of prayer in enlightening the understanding. How could this man, who, on account of his want of talent, had so much difficulty in being admitted into the seminary, and had, since his promotion to the priesthood, spent all his time in prayer and in the labors of the confessional,—how, I ask, could he have acquired the power to teach like one of the Fathers of the Church? Whence did he derive his astonishing knowledge of God, of nature, and of the human soul? How came it that his thoughts and expressions so often coincided with those of the greatest minds in the Church—as with such lights as St. Augustine, St. Bernard, St. Thomas Aquinas? The spirit of God was pleased to engrave on the heart of this holy priest all that he should know and teach to others. His lively faith was the great fountain-head whence he drew all his wisdom. His book was the death and the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. To him all other science was vain and useless. He sought wisdom, not amid the dusty tomes of libraries, not in the schools of philosophy, but in prayer, kneeling at his Master's feet, and covering these divine feet with his kisses and tears. It was in the presence of his divine Lord, hidden in the Sacrament of his love, that he learned all his wisdom. Prayer, then, is certainly a most powerful means to acquire true and solid wisdom. "If any one wants wisdom," says St. James, "let him ask it of God, who giveth to all men abundantly, and it shall be given to him." (James i, 5.)

St. Paulinus reproached Jovian, a Christian philosopher, for wasting so much time in studying the works of philosophy, whilst he neglected to advance in virtue. Jovian excused himself by saying that he had no time left for prayer. "You find time," said Paulinus, "to de-

vote to philosophy, and you find none to devote to a Christian life."

There are many students who imitate Jovian; they spend almost all their time in studying mathematics, astronomy, profane history, philosophy, and the like; and when blamed for this, they excuse themselves by saying that they have no time left for prayer and meditation. What a delusion! They find time to become learned, and they can find no time to prepare themselves for the worthy reception of holy orders! Seneca uttered a great truth, when he said: "We do not know what is necessary, because we learn what is superfluous." (De Brev. Int., chap. I.) Most assuredly it would be much better for a student to give up studying, than to let his studies interfere with his spiritual progress.

Whenever St. Ignatius found that a student could not apply himself to his studies with calmness of heart, and that these studies were an obstacle to his advancement in virtue, he usually took him away from his studies and made him apply himself exclusively to prayer and meditation. "It may be," said he, "that he is well able to study, but study will be hurtful to him. What does it profit a man if he gaineth the whole world, but cometh to suffer the loss of his soul?" (Life, by C. Genelli.)

St. Charles Borromeo made it a rule that a candidate for the priesthood should be asked in particular, before his ordination, whether he had been in the habit of making his meditation and in what manner he made it. Father Avila, S. J., dissuaded every one from becoming a priest who was not given to prayer.

Indeed, a student who is not fond of meditation and prayer, will never be a good, holy priest. Woe to such

a one, if, during the course of his studies, he has not always preferred prayer to all his other occupations! His heart will be like a hard, barren rock. Experience teaches that there is nothing which dries up the heart more quickly than study which is not sanctified by prayer. The heart of such a student will be like a reservoir that has a larger outlet than inlet. The dry land will soon make its appearance. Being destitute of interior lights, he will not see the necessity of sanctifying himself and acquiring those virtues and qualifications which the priest must have to perform his pastoral duties worthily, and to persevere until death amid the dangers and vices of the world. As parish priest he must have the charity and zeal, the learning and prudence, the love of labor and study that are necessary in order to fulfil the awful obligation by which he shall be bound, under pain of mortal sin, to hear the confessions of all the adults of the parish in which he may be placed.

He must receive with kindness all who approach the tribunal of penance, the poor, the ignorant, and the vicious. He must bear the tediousness and annoyance which he will often feel on account of the stupidity, ignorance, insensibility and obstinacy of so many among his people.

He must have the patience and love of labor to examine and instruct all those who may be ignorant and unable to examine their conscience and to confess their sins. He must dispose them for absolution by fervent exhortations. He must have the learning and patience to discover the causes of the spiritual maladies of sinners, and to prescribe the means by which they may be healed. He must have the learning necessary to direct all classes of penitents, and point out to them their obligations in all

the different professions and states of life. He must have the love of study necessary to persevere and improve till death his knowledge of the sacred sciences. He must have the love of neighbor necessary to bear the overwhelming fatigue of hearing an immense number of long, wearisome, and embarrassing confessions. He must have the spirit of prayer to be able to turn to God for help in the numberless temptations to which the devil may expose him. He will often feel tempted to refuse hearing certain penitents or to put them off to another time or to abridge or hurry on over their confessions, or to neglect to examine and instruct the ignorant and to excite sinners to sorrow, or to discourage, or at least not to encourage, frequent confession and Communion among the people.

As parish priest he must have the spirit of detachment from the world to be able to despise its goods and pleasures, and to lead, in the midst of the world, a life of solitude and retirement, a life entirely consecrated to the fulfilment of his pastoral duties, to sacred study and prayer, a life devoted to the advancement of God's glory and to the salvation of souls. Now I ask how shall the ecclesiastical student acquire all these necessary virtues and qualifications unless he is thoroughly imbued with the spirit of prayer and self-denial.

The ecclesiastical student who lacks the spirit of prayer will not possess a lively faith. When he becomes a priest, his genuflections at the altar will be like an automaton. Could you see the interior dispositions of such a priest whilst celebrating Mass, whilst administering the sacraments, or reciting the divine office, you would be tempted to believe that you saw an actor on the stage, or a harlequin going through his rôle. The sermons and all

the actions of such a priest will be lifeless and mechanical.

But there is no need of heaping proofs on proofs. I will merely repeat, in conclusion, what I have said before, that a student who does not practise prayer and meditation during the course of his studies, will be unfit for ordination, and will, if he becomes a priest, not only lose his own soul, but cause the ruin of thousands of others.

St. Basil and St. Gregory Nazianzen were most intimate friends. Their friendship, however, was not founded in a light and variable affection, but in true love and genuine virtue.

No jealousy, envy, impatience, or other passion was ever able to impair the union of their hearts. They had no other interest, no other desire than to consecrate themselves entirely to God, and to console, encourage, and assist each other in realizing this great end.

There is no passion which more easily seduces youth than that of sensual affection under the sacred name of friendship. How often does that which at first seems virtue terminate in guilty passion. These pious and true friends were modest and watchful. They mortified their senses; and they were assiduous in prayer. By these means they kept themselves free from the many dangerous snares laid for them by the enemy of souls. They behaved so modestly, that they appeared like angels in human form. From this pure friendship they derived all the support and succor which holy friendship in God usually affords to pious souls. They had the same lodging; they sat at the same table; they pursued the same employments and seemed to have but one

will. All things were common between them, and in all they did, watching or sleeping, fasting or taking the necessary refreshments, studying or whatever else they did—they had but this one end in view, to glorify God, to adore and honor him with all the faculties of their soul and do in everything his holy will.

But with their fervor and watchfulness they could not have preserved their innocence had they not carefully shunned the rock of bad company. "We did not keep company with scholars that were impious, rude, or impudent," says St. Gregory, "but only with those that were the best and the most peaceable, and those whose conversation was of great profit to us; as we were persuaded that it is an illusion to seek the company of sinners on pretence of reforming or converting them. It is far more probable that such companions will communicate their poison to us."

This is a very important advice for all, but especially for ecclesiastical students. The neglect of this advice has often been the ruin of the strongest virtue and of the most assured vocation to the priesthood.

"We knew only two streets," says St. Gregory. "The one led us to church and to the holy teachers and doctors who there served at the altar and nourished the flock of Christ with the food of life.

"The other street which we knew, but which we held in much less esteem, was the road to the schools and to our masters in worldly science. We left to others the streets which led to the theatre and other places of amusement. Our only aim and all our glory was to be called, and to be in truth Christians." (Butler's Lives of the Saints, June 14.)

Rules of Study by St. Thomas Aquinas.

1. Do not *begin* with difficult questions, go by degrees. The knowledge of simple truths will help you gradually to understand those that are deeper.

2. Never be in a hurry to express your opinion, or to display your learning. Speak little, never answer hastily.

3. Avoid useless conversation, in order that you may not lose your time and the spirit of devotion.

4. Be careful to keep your conscience pure. Never do anything that could defile your soul and tarnish its beauty in the eyes of God.

5. Pray unceasingly.

6. Love retirement. Give yourself up to reading and meditation. You will then be admitted to familiar intercourse with God. You will converse with him heart to heart.

7. Let no solitude render you gloomy or sour-tempered. Be always kind and cheerful; yet never *too familiar* with any one. "Familiarity breeds contempt."

8. Avoid useless visits. Do not trouble yourself about what is said or done in the world.

9. Imitate the saints as far as you can and when you cannot attain their perfection, humble yourself.

10. Whenever you learn anything good, no matter where, try to remember it always.

11. Never be satisfied with a superficial knowledge of anything. Try to understand everything in all its depth, in all its bearings. Never remain in doubt when you can arrive at certainty.

12. Do not force your talents. Seek not to penetrate what is above your understanding. Use prayer and penance.

CHAPTER IX.

The Marks of Non-vocation to the Priesthood.

The dignity of the priesthood is not earthly. It is altogether heavenly, and its ministry would do honor even to the angels. A priest ought to look upon himself as placed among the heavenly spirits, and under obligation of being no less pure and holy than they. This is clear from the tremendous sacrifice of the altar, which requires in the offerer a purity worthy of heaven; a sanctity far surpassing that which was so rigorously required of the priests of the Old Law. "When you behold the Lord himself lying as victim on the altar, and the priest standing and praying over the divine victim, do you feel as if you were on earth, or do you not rather feel as if you were to be translated to heaven? O wonderful prodigy! O excess of divine mercy! He who is seated above at the right hand of the Father, is in that moment held by the priest in his hands; he gives himself to be touched and received. Behold Elias before the altar praying alone, the multitude standing around him silent and trembling, and the fire falling from heaven and consuming the sacrifice. What is now done is far more extraordinary, more awful and more astonishing. The priest is here standing and calls down from heaven, not fire, but the Holy Ghost; he prays a long time, not that an earthly fire may be kindled, but that the fire of grace may touch the sacrifice, and that the hearts of all who partake of it may be purified." (St. Chrysostom.)

No wonder that the saints have always dreaded the dignity of the priesthood as a burden of enormous weight. "Omnes sanctos reperio divini ministerii ingentem veluti molem formidantes." (St. Cyrillus Alexander, Hom. 1, de festo Pasch.) "Can any one then, says St. Cyprian, be so daring as to attempt of himself and without a divine call to assume the sublime dignity of the priesthood?" (Ep. 55, ad Cornel.)

Now what are the marks of non-vocation? We may, first of all, lay down the general rule that he is not called to the priesthood who lacks the qualities which the Church requires in all those who wish to receive Holy Orders. When God calls any one to so sublime a state of life, he endows him, as we said above, with all the qualities necessary to bear the burdens of the priesthood and to fulfil its duties. The absence of one or more of these qualities is a certain sign of non-vocation.

It is not less certain that he who is subject to certain vices which are opposed to the virtues which every priest must possess; he who has some notable outward defect; he who is afflicted with some grave infirmity or corporal deformity which renders him incapable of exercising ecclesiastical functions with dignity and decorum—such a one, I say, is not called to the priesthood, and has, in these vices, defects or deformities, a certain mark of non-vocation.

In order the better to understand these rules and their consequences, we will distinguish these marks of non-vocation into *intrinsic* or personal, and *extrinsic* or circumstantial.

Intrinsic, or personal signs of non-vocation are of three kinds—vices of the mind, vices of the heart, and defects of the body.

1. I say, first of all, that *vices of the mind* are signs of non-vocation to the ecclesiastical state. I will call attention to the most striking. Amid the defects which exclude persons from the priesthood, the first is a profound, natural and well-nigh invincible *ignorance.*

The Holy Spirit marks out knowledge among the first qualities of a priest. He says that the people shall seek knowledge from the lips of the priest. (Malach. ii, 7.) Our divine Saviour, has, so to speak, summed up the whole mission of his Apostles and their successors when he said to them : "Go and teach." The priest is essentially a teacher. The aspirant to the priesthood must, therefore, possess a certain aptitude for study ; he must be capable of teaching the truths of faith to the souls entrusted to him. Now, a young man of dull and obtuse mind is not capable of fulfilling these duties. He is evidently called to the ordinary state of life ; he is not called to the priesthood.

We must, however, pay attention to the social position of the individual. A person gifted with great piety, who enjoys an honorable subsistence and who desires to instruct and edify his brethren by his example and virtue, may be admitted to Holy Orders, even though his intellectual faculties are not brilliant.

Moreover, the Church does not require such brilliant talents in religious who are placed in the cloister, and may there exercise many priestly functions without possessing very extensive learning.

The marks we have offered especially concern those who aspire to the functions of the sacred ministry in parishes. This vocation evidently supposes a docile mind, moderate talents, and a certain aptitude for study.

Deep-seated ignorance is, therefore, a sign of non-vocation.

Secondly, I call *singularity*, especially in matters of piety, a vice of the mind. St. Francis de Sales had such a dread of singular and eccentric characters that he always refused to ordain them. He feared less certain weaknesses of the heart, generously atoned for, than pretence of extraordinary devotion, craving for admiration, excentricities of behavior, affected humility joined to fondness of speaking of one's self, strange manners, excessive zeal for trifling things, bitterness in criticising others, while excessively indulgent to themselves. Such characters are unfitted for the functions of the priesthood. He who has not succeeded in overcoming these faults, is ignorant of the very first principles of true devotion. The piety which is according to the heart of God, has a horror of all these excentricities. He who is strictly pious applies himself first of all to the fulfilment of the ordinary duties of life; he loves modesty and simplicity; he respects the common rules; he makes himself remarkable, not by freaks and excentricities, but by the order and regularity of his conduct. Even those saints whom God has led by extraordinary paths to the higher degrees of contemplation, have first passed through the inferior degrees and the ordinary paths of Christian perfection. Indeed, at the age when we have to deliberate on the choice of a state of life, we can hardly hope to have already gone through these ordinary paths. Such singularity in young people, therefore, always indicates oddities of mind which in reality spring from disgust for the necessary duties of life, or from the freaks of a blind and inconstant piety.

A strong and incurable tendency to scrupulosity is also a sign of non-vocation to the ecclesiastical state. This disposition is a real sickness of the mind, whose cure is extremely difficult. Now the obligations and duties of the ecclesiastical state are for scrupulous persons a natural subject of disquiet and perplexity.

The scrupulous man fears where there is no cause for fear. For him everything is a subject of hesitation and anxiety. His duties, whether performed or omitted, are an inexhaustible source of imaginary faults. Everything that presents itself to him as a duty is seen only through the prism of his unhappy disposition. The good advice that is given him, instead of assisting him, embarrasses him and gives rise to new difficulties. He is like those sick persons whose stomachs are so weak that they can bear neither food nor medicine. Beneath the burden of the priesthood, this evil is almost incurable.

Moreover, how can he who is not in a fit state to guide himself, become a good guide for the people of God, or accept the guidance of others? I say, without hesitation, that those who are thoroughly scrupulous, should be rejected from the sanctuary, in order to preserve them from insanity in this world and from a very sad fate in the next.

Hypocrisy is also a vice altogether opposed to the holiness of the ecclesiastical state. Jesus Christ, who calls all his ministers to follow his footsteps, calls himself the *truth*. He recommends to his disciples the simplicity of the dove, united with the prudence of the serpent. He smote with anathema the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, whom he styled *whited sepulchres*. The chastisement of Ananias and Sapphira is a terrible warning to those hypocrites who

try to deceive the Church. Hypocrites are certainly not called to the functions of the priesthood.

Deeply-rooted pride is another impediment to the ecclesiastical state. Pride is the vice that cast Lucifer from heaven, and Adam from Paradise. Pride has been the source of all the heresies that have afflicted the Church, and of all the schisms that have rent her bosom. This vice, if indulged in, destroys the spirit of subordination which is the bond of ecclesiastical hierarchy; it leads to that rigor and inflexibility which make a superior unbearable to his subordinates; it leads to presumption, which is incompatible with prudence; it hurries its victim into disputes and quarrels, which are contrary to charity and to the spirit of the Church. "If any man," says the Apostle, "seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor the Church of God." (I Cor. ix, 16.) A proud spirit finds dangerous food for his pride in the dignity of the ecclesiastical state, and in the respect paid to his sacred character. The proud, like Lucifer, always end in a fall. We have many sad examples in our own day of celebrated priests who might have been subjects of glory to the Church, but who have unhappily become only subjects of shame and grief to her.

If a young man, therefore, is puffed up with vanity, is pretentious, full of self, quarrelsome, disliking obedience, indocile to superiors, harsh to inferiors, intolerant of all criticism, yet criticising every one, we say without fear of mistake that he has not the spirit of Jesus Christ, that he is not called to the priesthood. He who knows not how to obey, is not fit to command. He who knows not how to submit is not made to rule. "The servant of the Lord," says St. Paul, "must not wrangle; but be mild to-

wards all men, apt to teach, patient, with modesty admonishing them that resist the truth; if, peradventure, God may give them repentance to know the truth, and they may recover themselves from the snares of the devil, by whom they are held captive at his will." (II Tim. ii, 24, 26.) A proud and haughty spirit is incapable of observing this precept of the Apostle.

2. We next come to *vices of the heart.*

The most dangerous of all vices is that which, together with pride, is innate in all of us, which we have inherited from our first parents—*sensuality.* He who is addicted to the vice of impurity, who has to reproach himself with grave falls and inveterate evil habits, is clearly one of those who understand not and will never understand that counsel of Christ which every priest must faithfully follow. The tyranny of this vice over its slaves are terrible. There is nothing more opposed to the holiness of the priesthood than this shameful vice, which degrades the soul, blunts the noblest feelings of the heart, and completely destroys all relish for the things of God.

We will not enter into details. It is the duty of the director to examine carefully before God into each particular case. Of course, when the wounds are not yet deep or inveterate, when the will is powerful and grace is abundant, we may yet hope for a radical cure. But the sacred canons require that he who takes upon himself the yoke of the priesthood, should be free from this shameful vice; he should be perfectly free, with the freedom of the children of God.

Avarice, which often shows itself even in children, is also a sign of non-vocation. This was the dominant passion of Judas and the cause of his ruin. The avar-

icious man is inaccessible to charity, the first of Christian virtues, and the most necessary quality of a good pastor. Jesus Christ said that men should recognize his disciples by the love which they showed one to another. The avaricious man cannot be recognized by this mark as the disciples of Jesus Christ; he is always hard and immovable, always an egotist, always a worshipper of riches.

Idleness and indolence also constitute a serious impediment to the ecclesiastical vocation. A sluggard will never make the talent fructify which the Master has entrusted to him; he will bury it, like the faithless servant in the Gospel. He will not pluck up the cockle which is choking the good seed. Like the hireling who takes to flight at the approach of the wolf, he will suffer his sheep and lambs to be devoured, instead of protecting and defending them.

Hence St. Alphonsus says: "Debet Episcopus maxime curare ut inspiciat an, qui postulat promoveri, sit bene edoctus, et an sit studii cupidus: dum qui studii non est amator, nunquam idoneus erit Ecclesiæ, imo necessario erit pravus, nam (ut dici solet) otium est pater vitiorum." (De Episcopi Muneribus, No. 39.)

Inconstancy is also a mark of non-vocation. He who is fickle-minded is in constant danger of falling, while the priesthood is a fixed state, whose obligations are numerous and whose contests with hell are incessant. The sad results of this vice in a minister of God are evident to all.

But of all the signs which render a vocation suspicious, there is none more evident than a *motive which is purely human and temporal.*

As soon as a man says deliberately in his heart, or by his conduct, "Let us possess the sanctuary of God for

an inheritance," (Ps. lxxxii, 13) we may rest assured that he is not called by God, but urged by love of ease, avarice, pride, or ambition.

In order to distinguish the young man who is truly called from the one who enters only from interested motives, we must distinguish the three ways of regarding the advantages of the ecclesiastical state. This state offers considerable spiritual advantages; but in the eyes of the worldling it also promises honors, authority, and a comfortable livelihood.

He who considers only the spiritual advantages of this state, such as its more abundant graces, its opportunities of laboring for one's salvation, and who ignores altogether its mere temporal advantages—he indeed is fit to rank among the perfect.

He who, whilst appreciating and desiring the spiritual advantages of the ecclesiastical state, is influenced by the temporal advantages, though he considers them as only secondary, such a one does not sin against the divine law.

But they who consider only the temporal advantages of the ecclesiastical state, and who act as if the kingdom of God consisted in eating and drinking, to use the language of the Apostle, such can enter the ecclesiastical state only through the window, like robbers and thieves.

But how can you be sure that you desire to enter this state only from temporal motives? I answer: Examine, first, whether temporal motives alone present themselves almost always to your mind. Secondly, see whether the desire which these motives excite is lively, disturbing, sometimes violent.

Thirdly, inquire whether you have deliberately fos-

tered this desire for a long time in the hope of leading an easy, perhaps a dissipated life.

Fourthly, examine whether the principal object of this desire is a thing of great importance; for instance, the improvement of your position, or a considerable amelioration of that of your family.

Fifthly, inquire whether, in order to arrive at the priesthood, you are ready to employ all the means in your power, even unworthy ones, such as promises, threats, presents, hypocrisy, the influence of the great, simony, and so on. If, after this examination, you find that you are influenced by mere worldly motives, rest assured that it is not God, but mere flesh and blood that calls you to the priesthood, and renounce without delay your intention of becoming a priest. Jesus Christ, who reproached the crowd with following him only to obtain from him their food, (John, vi, 26) will reproach you on judgment-day with having yielded to the deceitful words of the devil: "All these," that is, all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, "will I give thee, if falling down thou wilt adore me." (Matt. iv, 8, 9.)

But is there any danger that young men will enter the ecclesiastical state from mere temporal motives nowadays when the Church has been stripped of her honors and wealth—nowadays when the clergy are almost everywhere hated and persecuted? Yes, undoubtedly this danger is to be feared. Experience has fully demonstrated the fact. Although the Church has lost much of her wealth and worldly honors, she still retains, thanks to God, sufficient means to maintain her ministers, and a general esteem, both capable of tempting vulgar ambition and enticing selfish hearts.

But, if you exclude from the priesthood those who are subject to pride, ambition, sensuality, you must exclude every one; for these vices are the sad inheritance of our first parents; they are found to a certain extent in all men.

It is true that all men possess a certain fund of pride and sensuality which springs from original sin, but it is also true that all are not ruled by these vices so as to become their slaves. These evil inclinations may be for all a source of untiring struggle, but they are not for all the source of a shameful slavery which absorbs the faculties of the soul and destroys all energy for good. You will find many who are tempted by these vices, but who succeed in overcoming them with the help of grace, and who gain thereby new strength and courage.

There are others, however, who take upon themselves the yoke of the priesthood without being able to break the chains of pride and sensuality, who are incapable of gaining that sway over self which is essential to virtue. It is of these latter that we spoke when we said that their vices are a sign of non-vocation. If the Church were to receive among her pastors only those who are exempt from all faults and all imperfections, the gates of the sanctuary would have to be closed against the children of men, and the priestly functions could be entrusted only to the angels of heaven. The most solid virtue does not exclude every evil inclination, every temptation, every struggle; on the contrary, true virtue supposes such trials; for virtue properly consists in the ease with which we conquer our enemies, and surmount the obstacles that hell opposes to us.

What we wish to say is that those are not called to the

priesthood who are deeply infected with some dangerous vice, and ruled by evil habits which are almost incurable.

But since it is not necessary to have acquired great virtues before entering the ecclesiastical state, wherefore, you ask, is it necessary to have uprooted these dangerous vices?

The reason is clear. Young persons who carry in their heart the germs of virtue, will easily, with the help of grace, nourish and develop these virtues; and notwithstanding certain defects and weaknesses, they are on the high road to solid virtue.

But those who, at the age for choosing a state of life, are already subject to some dangerous vice, will probably remain enslaved by that vice all the days of their life. They have but little hope of conquering that vice and of arriving at the perfect liberty of the children of God. He who is himself the slave of vice, can have no hope of one day combating successfully the vices of others, or serving the Church as a faithful minister. He must choose the common state of life and try to save his soul in that state.

But are such vices and evil inclinations ever met with in the hearts of young men? Are not such vices rather the portion of full grown men?

Alas! we must confess that great vices are often found even in youth; aye, found at an age when we rarely meet with great virtues. This is one of the sad consequences of original sin. It is no less true that young men infected with these vices sometimes present themselves at the gates of the sanctuary in the hope of entering. We must keep watch, therefore, at the entrance of

the Temple of the Lord to exclude therefrom the "profane," that is to say, all those who are swayed by violent passions, inveterate habits, and faults which we may call incorrigible. How can those who are the slaves of their passions imagine that they are called to lead others into the paths of salvation, and to direct them therein, when they themselves have not yet entered these paths and when notwithstanding the grace which assists them they know not how to persevere in the grace of God? Let not such unworthy wretches dare insult, by their unwelcome presence, the good Master of the House.

Here may also be added, as a mark of non-vocation, what we read in Bishop Herbert's Preface to the Life of St. John Baptist de Rossi:

"Take it as a rule," said Dr. Windishmann, the Vicar-general of Cardinal Reisach in Munich, to Bishop Herbert of Salford, "that no young man is called to be a priest, who is incapable of receiving impressions of devotion to our Blessed Lady. A truly repentant sinner, with true devotion to the Blessed Virgin, is a far safer subject for ordination than he who has never been a great sinner, but is proof against her attraction and claims. I would say that he who is not devout to Mary can never be a good priest, and I should myself never feel sure of his salvation. Take this as an unerring rule when you have any responsibility in the training of young men for the priesthood."

3. We now come to the *defects of the body*, which hinder one from entering the ecclesiastical state.

We may consider as a sign of non-vocation, whatever may be the piety of the subject, not only any notable deformity, any mutilation, or infirmity which renders one

physically or morally incapable of performing the functions of the sacred ministry, but also periodical maladies which excite fear or disgust. Those whom God afflicts in this manner should endeavor to sanctify themselves by the exercise of Christian patience and resignation. In withholding from them the natural qualities necessary for the exercise of the holy priesthood, God clearly shows that he does not call them to that holy state.

The canonical *irregularities* determined by the laws of the Church are also extrinsic sign of non-vocation. The Church looks upon certain bodily and mental defects as irregularities which disqualify those who are subject to them from receiving Holy Orders, and also from exercising the sacred functions of the ministry. The Church does not admit to Holy Orders those whose bodily defects make it impossible for them to exercise the ecclesiastical functions, or to exercise them in a becoming manner; such, for example, as the loss of a thumb or of the left eye, or if one's body is so disfigured as to excite the horror, or contempt, or pity of the people. If these defects arise after ordination, the priest can exercise those functions for which his defect does not disqualify him. Thus, a priest who has lost his hand cannot say Mass, but he may preach and hear confessions. A priest who has become deaf cannot hear confessions but he may say Mass. The Church does not admit to Holy Orders lunatics, idiots, possessed, epileptical persons, as also those who are grossly ignorant. If a person has been afflicted in any of these ways, he cannot be ordained without a dispensation; and if, after ordination, he is so afflicted, he cannot exercise the functions of his Order until after a year's probation, until the bishop is satisfied that he has been perfectly cured.

Irregular are also those who are born out of lawful wedlock: and those who are not of the prescribed canonical age; and if such do receive orders without the necessary dispensation, they remain perpetually irregular. Those who are newly converted are also irregular, because they are regarded as infants in the spiritual life, and may be lost through pride, if they see themselves so quickly raised to the dignity of spiritual fathers and masters. (I. Tim. iii, 6.)

Irregular are also slaves, as long as they are in bondage; also those who are burdened with debts, until those debts or obligations are cancelled or discharged. This irregularity is founded in the desire of the Church that her pastors should not be entangled in secular affairs after their ordination. (II. Tim. ii, 4.)

Irregular, again, are those who are baptized; those who are married; those whose office or employment has required them to shed blood, to mutilate or to put any one to death. Hence soldiers who have fought in battle, surgeons, and judges who have condemned men to death, are irregular.

Those also are irregular who have been subjected to any public penance, or punishment, or who, by their scandals and notorious excesses, have lost their reputation, or become infamous.

Crimes, such as homicide, illicit mutilation, heresy (that is, the exterior or public profession of any error condemned by the Church); infamy (such as the practice of usury, the profession of stage-player, and the like); the uncanonical reception or exercise of Holy Orders, the reception of baptism twice, and the violation of censures already incurred, render one irregular. It must

be remarked, however, that baptism removes all those irregularities which arise from crime. The religious profession removes irregularities arising from illegitimate birth. The pope can dispense from the greater part of irregularities, and the bishop can dispense from those arising from hidden crime, that is, which have not been carried to the public court. He cannot, however, dispense from the irregularity arising from voluntary homicide.

It often happens that a young man is in doubt whether he is called to the priesthood or not. Now in this state of doubt he must make use of prayer and reflection, and he must ask advice. If he faithfully uses these means he will soon find out whether he is called or not. Though the path be ever so dark and though the ways of God be ever so hidden and mysterious, the dawn will come at last. "Qui fecit ex tenebris lucem splendescere, Ipse illuxit in cordibus nostris." God himself is the Morning Star arising upon high to visit those who hope in him: "Post tenebras spero lucem." The Church teaches us to cry to him, as to the uncreated Light:

O Lux beatissima,
Reple cordis intima
Tuorum fidelium.

To prayer must be joined serious reflection. "In meditatione mea exardescit ignis." If he who is called to the ecclesiastical state does not from the beginning endeavor to acquire a clear knowledge of his position; if he does not carefully survey its extent, its responsibilities, and its excellence, he will fall short—first, in his aim, and secondly in the realization of that aim. "Intellectus

ogitabundus principium omnis boni" is eminently true especially when choosing a state of life.

Now as food for reflection, I would strongly advise every one who is in doubt about his vocation to read the "Lives of the Saints;" not those short lives, which are little better than a synopsis, but the more complete biographies. These Lives introduce us to an intimate acquaintance with the saints, who are the only true heroes and heroines that the world has ever seen. The saints are, moreover, the encouraging models set up by our Blessed Lord for our imitation. It is very useful to place their example before our eyes when seeking to find out our vocation.

Finally, if you wish to find out your vocation with certainty, you must not only pray and reflect, you must above all things consult a prudent spiritual director, and place yourself under his guidance. You must then abandon yourself with unbounded confidence to the guidance of the man of God; you must explain to him your views and ideas; you must open your heart to him, and communicate to him your projects and desires; you must discover to him even your weaknesses and mortal wounds; you must acknowledge to him your evil inclinations, your faults and your sins. You must make known to him your fears and hopes for the future. In a word, you must show him the depths of your soul, in order that this counsellor may act towards you as a father, a physician and friend. You must also be careful not to conceal from him the graces and favors that God may have bestowed upon you. If, for instance, you have had from childhood a decided inclination for piety and the things of God; if the frequentation of the Holy

Sacraments is for you full of delights; if you feel a great attraction to prayer, a great zeal for the salvation of souls and the glory of God; if you feel in your heart disgust and fear of the world, a horror of sin, an ardent love for the practice of such virtues as purity, mortification, humility, and obedience. You should not conceal these workings of grace from your director. You must expose them to him with candor and simplicity, as if addressing Jesus Christ himself. You must enter into all the details capable of enlightening your director and guiding his judgment. You must tell him about what age you thought seriously of embracing a more perfect state of life; under what circumstances these thoughts or desires come to your mind; whether on feasts-days, at the time of Communion, or in the midst of amusements and dissipation; whether these thoughts pursue you day and night, whether you repeatedly rejected them or not; whether they rejoice or sadden your heart. To all these questions and others which a prudent director will put to you, you must give a full and honest answer.

If you act in this manner, you will throw great light on the all-important question of your vocation. "The good counsels of a friend," says the Holy Ghost, "are sweet to the soul," (Prov. xxvii, 9.) These words are literally verified in all those who consult the Lord with faith and simplicity by following the counsels of his prudent ministers. This is the ordinary way of God's Providence. Our Lord sent St. Paul to Ananias to learn from him the nature of his vocation. Should, however, the vocation of a student to the priesthood always remain doubtful, he must not be admitted to Holy Orders, for it is a principle of moral theology that no one should

enter upon a state of higher perfection unless it is morally certain that he is called thereto by God. To admit a candidate of a doubtful vocation to the priesthood through false compassion, indulgence, or some other unworthy motive is indeed misplaced compassion and charity. Experience teaches that to impose the yoke and burden of the priesthood on one of a doubtful vocation is *cruelty* rather than charity. God, it is true, will not refuse the necessary graces to fulfil the duties of the sacerdotal state to those who, in good faith, may be ordained priests, yet there are very few who profit by those graces, especially in a country like America; the majority of them soon walk about with a very guilty conscience. Their lives became very disedifying and often fearfully scandalous. It is therefore necessary to be very discreet in admitting candidates to the priesthood. No one should receive Holy Orders unless it is certain beyond all reasonable doubt that he is called by God, and unless he has sufficient virtue to bear the burden of the priesthood.

Hence the great Apostle St. Paul forbade Timothy to ordain neophytes (I. Tim. iii, 6); that is, according to St. Thomas, neophytes in perfection as well as neophytes in age: "Qui non solum ætate, neophyti sunt, sed et qui neophyti sunt perfectione." The Council of Trent has said: "Sciant episcopi debere ad hos (sacros) ordines assumi dignos duntaxat, et quorum probata vita senectus sit, juxta verba scripturæ; ætas senectutis vita immaculata." (Sap., iv. 9.) And of this positive virtue, it is necessary, according to St. Thomas, to have not a doubtful but a certain knowledge. (Suppl., q. 36, art. 4, ad. 3.) "Sed etiam habeatur certitudo de qualitate promovendorum." This,

according to St. Gregory, is particularly necessary with regard to the virtue of chastity : "Nullus debet administerium altaris accedere, nisi cujus castitas ante susceptum ministerium fuerit approbata." (Lib. 1, epist. 42.)

"Certum est," says St. Alphonsus, "nullum posse admitti ad ordines qui prius in virtutibus probatus non sit et præcipue in diuturna continentia, quam ordinati in sacris profiteri debebunt. Habemus in c. Nullus, dist. 25, ex S. Gregorio : "Nullus debet ad ministerium altaris accedere, nisi cujus castitas ante susceptum ministerium fuerit approbata."—Lid. 1, epist. 42. Et requirit S. Pontifex ut hujusmodi probatio habeatur a multis annis, dicens : "Ne unquam ii qui ordinati sunt pereant, prius aspiciatur, si vita eorum continens ab annis plurimis fuerit." Hanc eamdem probationem requirit Trident., (sess. 23, c. 13, de ref.) dum præscribit ordines sacros non conferri nisi iis qui in minoribus ordinibus probati sunt, nimirum quorum bonæ vitæ experientia habeatur.

Summa igitur hæc est quod non potest dubitari quin episcopus graviter peccet admittendo ad ordines sacros indignum ; indignus autem est quicunque sufficientem probationem non dedit de sua positiva bonitate. Rationem affert S. Thomas, dicens, (2. 2. q. 184, a. 6.) ad ordinem sacrum requiri majorem sanctitatem quam ad statum religiosum, "quia per sacrum ordinem deputatur ad dignissima ministeria." Et alibi, (Suppl. q. 36, a. 1, ad 3.) "Sicut illi qui ordinem suscipiunt super plebem constituuntur gradu ordinis, ita et superiores sint merito sanctitatis." Itaque, juxta S. Thomam, sicut clerici, per ordinem sacrum quem suscipiunt, elevantur ad gradum superiorum super populum christianum, ita debent reperiri superiores merito sanctitatis. Ideoque asserit

quod opus habent eo gratiæ gradu acquisito (intelligitur certe de gratia non *gratis data*, sed de illa quæ nos gratos Deo facit, quia hoc solum meritum sanctitatis producit) quæ eos dignos reddat, ut inter Jesu Christi ministros annumerentur : " Et ideo præexigitur gratia quæ sufficiat ad hoc quod digne connumerentur in plebem Christi." Deinde concludit Sanctus quod non sufficiet episcopo ordinanti, ut aliquem ad ordinem sacrum promoveat, si nihil mali sciat, sed etiam debet esse certus de probitate ordinandi : "Sed amplius exigitur, (sunt Angelici verba,) ut secundum mensuram ordinis injungendi habeatur certitudo de qualitate promovendorum." Et ad hanc rem adducit auctoritatem S. Dionysii, qui dicit neminem in ministrum divinorum, sicut est sacerdos, audere assumi, nisi per diuturnum habitum se Deo conformem cognoscat : " In divino omni non est audendum ducem fieri, nisi secundum omnem habitum suum factus sit deiformissimus et Deo simillimus."

Præterea, sicut peccaret Ordinandus, si probitate positiva carens, nempe habitu bonæ vitæ jam acquisito, vellet in sacris Ordinibus initiari, saltem ob periculum, cui se exponit non sustinendi onus, quod suscipit ferendum, et præcipue cœlibatus, sine Dei vocatione, quam certe tunc non est præsumendum habere ; ita tanto magis peccaret Episcopus, qui eum ordinaret, si suæ emendationis non præcederet diuturna probatio. Ait S. Thomas 2. 2. q. 189. a. 1. ad 3. : " Ordines sacri præexigunt sanctitatem, unde pondus Ordinum imponendum parietibus jam per sanctitatem desiccatis." Adducit S. doctor similitudinem fabricæ, dicere volens quod, quemadmodum parietes recenter elevati pondus grave sustinere nequeunt ; ita iis, qui paulo ante mores mutarunt

et adhuc ab humore vitiorum purgati non sunt, non est imponendus sacer Ordo, qui secum affert debitum perpetuæ continentiæ, et vitæ exemplaris, quam ministrum altaris decet. Itaque Episcopus sacrum Ordinem indigno conferens, duplici titulo peccat: peccat quia suo muneri deest, et peccat quia co-operatur omnibus peccatis, quæ ille committet, et causa erit ut alii etiam peccent. Hoc idem innuit S. Paulus (1. Timot v. 22.) cum dixit: "Manus cito nemini imposueris, neque communicaveris peccatis alienis." Super quem textum postea dixit S. Leo; "Quid est communicare peccatis alienis, nisi talem effici ordinantem, qualis ille est, qui non meruit ordinari?" (De Episc. Muneribus, 36, 37, 38.)

The Fathers of the Church strongly condemn the hasty and inconsiderate ordination of priests. "Who is he," they ask, "that thus fashions, as if it were an ephemeral thing of clay, the guardian of truth, him who shall take his stand with angels, who shall send up the sacrifice to the altar on high, who shall share with Christ in the priestly office, and to say something greater still, who shall be a God and the maker of a God?

One day, St. Leo I prayed most fervently to St. Peter to obtain for him the forgiveness of his sins. He received the following answer from St. Peter: "I have prayed for thee to the Lord; he has forgiven thy sins; but there is one sin the forgiveness of which you must try to obtain by most fervent prayers, and this sin is that you have transgressed the apostolic law, which strictly forbids you to ordain any one unless he has the marks of a divine vocation. (Life of St. Leo I). "If in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke xxiii, 31.) For, who is holier and more prudent than Leo was?

The learned and saintly Bishop Malou of Bruges, Belgium, declared that it had been his constant prayer that he might never have the misfortune to ordain any one who had no vocation, or who was one day to dishonor the priesthood. "I think," he adds, "that Heaven has granted me this favor. There is only one of whom I feel any doubt: and that one is enough to force from me daily bitter tears, and to make me constantly fear the judgment of God." (In a MS. entitled *Conseils à Mon Successeur.*)

St. Francis de Sales trembled at the reflection that one of the principal duties of a Bishop is not to confer Holy Orders upon any one who is unworthy of them. Neither noble birth and learning nor any recommendation whatever could induce him to admit to Holy Orders one whose life had not been virtuous. The learning of a priest, he said, whose life is disedifying, is very detrimental to morality, as it gives a certain authority to vice. He admitted to Holy Orders but few, "as all good bishops do," says St. Alphonsus; "for I must confess that there are but few who become priests because they have a true vocation and sincere desire to live and work for the glory of God. No wonder, therefore, if there are but few good and zealous priests. St. Francis de Sales used to say that not many, but good priests were necessary to the Church?"

CHAPTER X.

The Sin of Those who Become Priests Without a Divine Vocation.

Nowadays, indeed, we seldom meet with men who, impudently transgressing both human and divine laws, cry out without shame or modesty, "Let us strive to possess the sanctuary of the Lord for an inheritance." We seldom meet with those who seize on the ecclesiastical functions as if they were their private property. Crimes of this kind were witnessed when the riches of the Church tempted the cupidity of worldings, and in an age when might prevailed against right. These deplorable excesses are not witnessed in our century. There are other dangers, however, which threaten the sanctuary.

Families are to be met with who, being but slightly blessed with the gifts of fortune, and burdened with a large family, desire, seek after, and foster in some member of the family a vocation to the ecclesiastical state as a means of suitably establishing him for life. This is especially the case where the young man is unable to carve out a career for himself in the world. There are some, too, who through sincere piety desire to have a priest in the family. It is an honor, a blessing for the family to have a son or brother a priest. Parents moved by such considerations, often exercise a great influence on the child's will. They represent to him the ad-

vantages of the priesthood, the inconveniences and difficulties of another career, and thereby prepare him gradually for the ecclesiastical state.

If God, by his inward graces, encourages the invitations that come from without, it is well and good. But if God does not call such a one to the sanctuary, the efforts and influence of such parents become for him a perfidious snare, a real danger. The will of parents, says St. Alphonsus, is not always a mark of divine vocation. In inducing their child to embrace the priesthood, such parents often seek not his spiritual welfare, but their own interest, and the advancement of the family. "Matres," says St. John Chrysostom, or another author, "corpora natorum amant, animas contemnunt; desiderant illos valere in sæculo isto, et non curant quid sint passuri in altero." (Hom. 35, Op. imp. in Mat.) We must be persuaded, as Jesus Christ has said, that with regard to the choice of a state of life, we have no enemies more dangerous than our own relatives. "Et inimici hominis domestici ejus." (Matt. x, 36.) Hence the Redeemer adds: "Qui amat patrem aut matrem plus quam me, non est me dignus." (Matt. xxxvii.) Oh! how many priests shall we see condemned on the day of judgment for having taken Holy Orders to please their relatives! (Selva.)

It sometimes happens also that a young man who has but little hope of advancement in the world is led to enter the priesthood from purely worldly motives. He will even do violence to himself in order to appear worthy of this high dignity. He hides his defects, dissembles his repugnance; but makes no advance in virtue. He looks upon the priesthood as a profession, as a means of making an easy and comfortable living.

"Fodere non valeo, mendicare erubesco." I know what I shall do; I will become a priest. "Aut miles, aut Capucinus." He wishes to become a priest like Judas, not for love of God, not for love of the people, but for love of the purse. Here, again, is a dangerous snare.

He who usurps the priesthood without vocation sins grievously against God, does great harm to the Church, and prepares for himself an unhappy eternity.

He sins grievously against God. We have already proved that God has at all times reserved to himself the choice of his priests as a sovereign right and as a mark of his empire over souls. Under the law of nature and under the written law he admitted to his altar only those whom he had himself chosen and called to the priesthood. Now God has reserved to himself the same right under the law of grace. He foretold by the prophet Isaias that he was determined to exercise this right. Foreseeing the conversion of pagan nations and their entry into the kingdom of the Messias, he says, "I will take of them," that is, "the nations, to be priests and Levites." (Isai. lxvi, 21.) Our heavenly Master proclaimed this sovereign right during his mortal life, not only by his example but also by his words. "I am the door," he says to his disciples; "all others as many as have come in," by other ways "are thieves and robbers." (John x, 7-9.) In another place he brands as "wolves in sheep's clothing" those who assume the government of the flock without being sent by the Master. (Matt. vii, 15.)

This divine right has never been violated with impunity. Under the Old Law God pronounced a terrible anathema against the usurpers of the priesthood. Speaking to Moses he said: "Thou shalt appoint Aaron and

his sons over the services of the priesthood. The stranger that approacheth to minister shall be put to death." (Numb. iii, 10.) This threat was carried out to the letter even in the lifetime of Moses. Who has not read with fear the punishment of Core, Dathan and Abiron, who, in the language of Holy Writ, went down alive into hell together with their families and worldly goods. (Numb. xvi, 30-33.) And why? Precisely for having attempted to usurp the functions of the priesthood.

Who does not remember the punishment of Saul for offering sacrifices that the priests alone had the right to offer? He was rejected, he and his family, from the face of the Lord, and cut off forever of the house of Israel. (I. King xiii, 14.) Oza, for having put his hand upon the Ark, notwithstanding the prohibition of God, was instantaneously struck dead. (II. Kings, vi, 6, 7.) Are not these examples significant enough? Do they not prove that the usurpation of the priesthood or of the priestly functions, is punished with spiritual death under the New Law as it was with bodily death under the Old? Our Saviour has expressed himself clearly on this subject. He has depicted the usurpers of the new priesthood in the most lively colors. He represents them as wolves in sheep's clothing; as thieves and assassins who steal into a man's house.

Now what do devouring wolves, assassins and thieves deserve if not death? See how our lord punishes these intruders on the last day. These false prophets who thrust themselves uncalled into the priesthood will cry out on the judgment-day: "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and cast out devils in thy name?" And the Sovereign Judge will answer them: "I never

knew you; depart from me, you that work iniquity." (Matt. vii, 15, 22, 23.) Ye shall have no part in my kingdom. You shall be condemned to eternal torments. The manner in which our heavenly Master describes this terrible scene on the last day is indeed well calculated to check those rash men who are tempted to enter the priesthood without vocation.

The Sovereign Judge gives only two principal reasons for condemning the wicked ; first, the usurpation of the sacred ministry, which is contrary to the love of God ; and secondly, harshness to the poor, which is contrary to the love of our neighbor. By this our Lord wishes us to understand that there are no crimes which lead so infallibly to everlasting punishment.

The usurpation of the priesthood under the New Law as well as under the Old is punished with death. This terrible chastisement is inflicted for two reasons : First, because this usurpation constitutes, as we have seen, a grievous violation of the sovereign rights which God has reserved to himself. Secondly because this usurpation causes a serious disturbance in the order of God's Providence.

Just as in the physical order God confers many of his benefits on us through secondary causes, that is, by his creatures, so in the order of grace, he communicates his benefits to us through his Church.

The Church is a supernatural world, a world of grace, the providential source of sanctification. The Church is a channel, a divine instrument, the link which binds us to God. She has her proper action determined by Providence, willed by God, but left to herself in such a manner that our Saviour, after having instituted her by an action

of his merciful and all-powerful arm, operates no more miracles to determine her effects, but lets her act according to ordinary laws, established by himself once for all. Now, this Church, which is, in the order of grace, a supernatural creation, acting of herself, is founded and built upon the priesthood. It is by the hierarchy of her ministers that she acts, governs, directs, and sanctifies. Bishops and priests are, then, in the plans of divine Providence, the dispensers of the sacred mysteries, the pastors of souls, the ministers of santification, the ordinary instruments of divine mercy. It is through the priest that the Church endeavors to prevent evil and to do good in the world. God's influence on souls ransomed by the blood of his divine Son is measured by the activity of the Catholic priesthood. We can therefore see at once how the usurpation of the priesthood disturbs the order of divine Providence. To usurp the priesthood is to lay a profane hand upon the foundations of that sacred building whose holy architect is our Lord Jesus Christ; it is to add a profane stone to the sacred foundation laid by the hand of the Most High; it is to undertake, with mere human strength, labors which can be accomplished only by the help of God himself; it is to build upon nature a work that has its foundation essentially in grace; it is to attribute to man a mission that can come only from God. As water which is infected in its source poisons the country through which it flows, so he who enters the priesthood without a divine vocation, can only seduce and ruin the souls confided to him; he can bring only confusion and death to his flock.

This crime does also great harm to our holy mother the Church. The Church has inserted in her canons the

anathemas which her divine Master has uttered, and has made them the basis of her discipline. She, too, drives away the wolves that ravage the flock and trouble her fold. She, too, condemns the thieves who come to steal her treasures, that is, the souls of her children. Those who usurp the priesthood inflict a wound on her rights, her affections, and her dearest interests.

The Church like a mother provides for the succession of the priesthood. In the rite of ordination, the archdeacon as he presents to the bishop the subjects to be ordained, says to him: "Our holy mother the Church begs you to ordain these subdeacons to the charge of the deaconate. . . Our holy mother the Church begs you to ordain these deacons to the charge of the priesthood." And the bishop asks him: "Dost thou know them to be worthy?" And the archdeacon answers: "As far as human frailty permits, I believe and testify that they are worthy of this charge." And the bishop answers: "God be thanked!" This solemn scene indicates both the confidence which the Church puts in the fitness and faithfulness of the subjects presented for ordination, and the hopes that she founds upon them. What a cruel shame and what a confusion for her, if the subjects thus presented are not really worthy; if they have positively and knowingly deceived their mother: if they have placed on her lips, by their knavery and hypocrisy, attestation which in the eyes of God is a lie! What are we to think of a Christian who would dare commit such a crime! He insults his spiritual mother by deceiving her in the exercise of her most sacred duties. He makes her serve as an instrument of malice and hypocrisy, and that too at the moment of ordination.

Moreover, this deception is the first link in the long chain of deceptions even still more cruel to her maternal heart. Who can enumerate all the harm that such an intruder causes to the flock of the Good Shepherd? He is a wolf that tears, slaughters and devours the sheep. He is a torrent that undermines, overturns and sweeps everything away; he is a fire that destroys and consumes everything. He is a demon that seduces and leads to hell thousands of souls! Human language has no words strong enough to describe the havoc caused to God's people by the wretch who has usurped the priesthood in spite of the laws of God and the Church.

> A man
> Who stole the livery of the court of heaven
> To serve the devil in,
> In holy phrase, transacted villanies
> That common sinners durst not meddle with.
> At sacred feast he sat among the saints
> And with his guilty hands touched holiest things.
> And none of sin lamented more, or sighed
> More deeply, or with graver countenance,
> Or longer prayer, wept o'er the dying man.
> A serpent with an angel's voice.

Well may the Church bewail so terrible a misfortune! She beholds her spiritual hierarchy dishonored by an unworthy member. She sees her beauty sullied and disfigured by one of her chiefs. She sees the sacred ministry interrupted and poisoned by one of her ministers. She sees the souls of her children ruined by finding a stumbling block in the very place where they should have found nothing but holiness and edification! Ah, well may the Church weep over this unworthy minister, as Jeremias wept over the scattered stones of the sanctuary of Sion!

But this is not all. He who usurps the priesthood without vocation, shall lead a life of sin and misery. We may compare him to the Apostles St. John and St. James while they were yet filled with human ambition. One day their mother approached our Saviour and said: "Say that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left, in thy kingdom." And Jesus, answering, said: "You know not what you ask." (Matt. xx, 21, 22.) We reply to him who would dare enter the sanctuary without being called of God: "You know not what you ask."

The priesthood is certainly a most sublime dignity, a state of holiness which elevates man to the rank of the angels; it is a profession which associates man with the hosts of heaven; it is a ministry which puts man in habitual communication with God himself. But, on the other hand, the priesthood is a dreadful burden. It imposes enormous duties, the gravest obligations and most weighty charges. When God calls any one to this holy state, all difficulties disappear through the operation of grace. God's grace enables us to fulfil our duties, and upholds our natural weakness.

But what shall become of him who, by his natural strength, undertakes to carry this burden alone and unaided? Should he have the rashness to take this burden upon his shoulders he will be infallibly crushed by it.

The spectacle of the unhappy wretch, who, in spite of God, has bound himself by the bonds of the priesthood, would, if it were fully comprehended, be enough to turn away forever those who aspire to this holy state without vocation. No sooner are his destinies fixed forever

than the unhappy man takes his hand off the plough; he looks behind him, and sighs after a liberty which he has deliberately forfeited. Weariness and disgust oppress him. Bitter regrets unceasingly torment him. His ungovernable passions like so many vultures gnaw at his heart. If he turns his gaze to the past, he can see nothing but his sins, his weakness, his falsehoods, his hypocrisy and his blind obstinacy. If he looks upon the present, he finds himself on an impassable road, or a path strewn with thorns. He sees that he is burdened with functions which are a subject of dread to men and angels, and he feels himself unable to fulfil them.

If he looks into the future he discovers nothing but the awful anathemas launched by God's justice against the usurpers of the priesthood. He trembles, he shudders at the spectacle. Can we conceive a more dreadful situation? Is there a more unfortunate wretch on earth? And for what has he hurled himself into this abyss? For the sake of a little paltry honor, for a handful of gold. Why, even if the wretch had lost his faith, sound reason alone should suffice to turn him away from this terrible fate.

In palliation of their crime, some of these intruders bring forward the example of the prophet. Isaias, they say, presented himself to the Lord and said: "Lo! here am I, send me." (vi, 8.) Yes, but Isaias was inspired. He offered himself for a merely temporary mission. He did not enter into a permanent state of life. Moreover, he offered himself to God; he did not thrust himself forward, and far from usurping the mission, he merely begged for it. Every one is free to offer himself to God and the Church, provided he withdraws if he is not accepted.

Among the saints of the Old Testament, you will find many who accepted only with fear and trembling the divine mission that heaven imposed upon them. Moses conjured God to send to his people, then in bondage to Egypt, some other deliverer than himself. "Send," said he, "whom thou wilt send;" (Exod. iv, 13) send the man according to thy own heart, but release me from this difficult undertaking. "Ah! ah! ah!" cried the prophet Jeremias, "I cannot speak." (i, 6.) How am I to announce thy word? Jonas, terrified by the heavenly mission confided to him, endeavored to withdraw himself from it by flight. (i, 3.) Such are the sentiments of self-distrust and fear that should animate those who have positive doubts concerning their vocation to the ecclesiastical state. Those who are animated by such sentiments and who submit themselves to the will of God, will not be in danger of falling into the crime of sacrilegiously usurping the priesthood.

"But," continue these rash intruders, "the Apostle says: 'If a man desireth the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.' (I. Tim. iii, 1.) Therefore he does not blame us for aspiring to Holy Orders."

The Apostle speaks of the aspiration, the desire which souls called of God feel to share, not in the honors and temporal advantages of the priesthood, but in its burdens and dangers. He speaks of the episcopate such as it was in the early ages of the Church. We can, however, understand these words of the episcopate in all ages; but we must, at the same time, be mindful of the qualities which the Apostle requires in those who are invested with this sublime dignity. In the days of St. Paul the episcopate and the priesthood were the road to mar-

tyrdom. Nowadays, indeed, as then, they promote the welfare of souls and the glory of God. To desire these things is "a good work," an act agreeble to God. This is what the Apostle wished to express. Those who cite these words in order to cover a sacrilegious usurpation, evidently do not understand them.

"But," you reply, "the religious state is free; every one may enter it, provided he is disposed to fulfil its duties. Our Saviour says to all the faithful, if thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast and give to the poor; and come, follow me." (Matt. xix, 21.) Now, the priesthood is, so to speak, connected with the religious state; therefore the priesthood is *implicitly* offered to all the faithful; therefore it is free for each one to accept it, and even seek after it."

I answer, this mode of reasoning is incorrect. It may be the Church grants the priesthood a little more easily to religious than to seculars, nevertheless, she has never considered ordination as a natural or necessary consequence of the religious profession. If vocation to the religious state has some analogy, and, even a certain affinity to the vocation to the priesthood, still, in many respects, these vocations are widely different. Many of those called to the religious state have no vocation for the priesthood. The religious, no less than the secular, apart from holy obedience, which directs him in all things, must, before receiving Holy Orders, examine his strength and his dispositions, and see whether he can finish the tower which he proposes to build. (St. Luke, xiv, 28, etc.)

He must see whether he is truly called to the priesthood and whether he can persevere to the end in the fulfilment of the duties of that state of life.

"But," continue these sacrilegious intruders, "there is a lack of priests. Many flocks are wandering about in want of pastors. We desire to devote ourselves to the welfare of souls."

This is a specious pretext. But, first of all, remember that it belongs to God, and not to you to recruit the ranks of his hosts. Very often he grants the victory to a mere handful of combatants. See how Gedeon with three hundred and eighteen soldiers defeated an immense multitude. Samson alone and unaided routed a vast army. In times of need, even angels fight side by side with God's ministers. A single angel in one night exterminated the army of Sennacherib. What God considers and esteems above all in his ministers is the vocation of Heaven, the divine mission. We read in the history of the Machabees that certain priests of God wished to distinguish themselves by making war on their foes, but they suffered a shameful defeat. And why? Because "they were not of the seed of those men," says the Holy Spirit, "by whom salvation was brought to Israel." (1 Mach. v, 62.) Nowadays, especially, nothing can supply the divine vocation, and the Church would rather count fewer ministers than have those whom God has not called. Innocent III says in formal terms, in the acts of the Fourth Lateran Council, "It is better, especially in ordaining priests, to have a few good ministers than many unworthy ones."

Fathers of the Church denounce severely all those who penetrate into the sanctuary without being called by God. "Priests who have not been called," says St. Alphonsus, "are indeed workmen and ministers of God, because they have received the sacerdotal character; but

they deserve rather to be called ministers of iniquity and rapine for having, of their own accord and without a vocation, intruded themselves into the sheepfold. They have not, as St. Bernard says, received the keys, but they have taken them by force: "Tollitis, non accipitis claves; de quibus Dominus queritur. Ipse regnaverunt, et non ex me." (De cont. ad cler.) As a vassal who impudently seizes on the office of minister violates the authority of his sovereign, so, in like manner, he who intrudes himself into the sanctuary without a divine vocation, violates the authority of God. How great is the rashness of him who, without the appointment and even in opposition to the will of his sovereign, attempts to administer the royal patrimony, to decide law-suits, to command the army and even to assume viceregal authority? "Auderetne aliquis vestrum," says St. Bernard, "terreni alicujus reguli, non præcipiente aut etiam prohibente eo, accipere ministeria, negotia dispensare?" And are not priests, as St. Prosper says, the administrators of the royal household? "Are they not," says St. Ambrose, "the leaders and rectors of the flock of Christ, the interpreters of the divine laws, the vicars of Christ?" To enter the house of even a private citizen, and dispose of his goods, and manage his affairs, would be considered the height of rashness and impudence, for even a private citizen has the right to appoint whomsoever he thinks fit to administer his affairs. "And will you," says St. Bernard, "intrude yourself into the house of God to take charge of his interests and to dispose of his goods without being called and introduced by God?" (De vita cleri., c. 3.) The Council of Trent has declared that the Church regards not as her minister, but as a robber, the man who

impudently assumes the office of the priesthood without a vocation. (Sess. 25, c. 4.)

Such priests may labor and toil, but their labors will profit them little. Should a servant who is commanded by his master to take care of the house, labor through his own caprice, in cultivating the vineyard, he may toil and sweat, but instead of being rewarded, he will be chastised by his master. In like manner, the labors of him who intrudes himself into the priesthood, are not acceptable to the Lord, because they are not conformable to his holy will.

Those who become priests without being called by God, shall be abandoned to eternal ignominy and destruction. "I did not send these prophets," says the Lord by the lips of Jeremiah, "and yet they ran." He afterwards adds: "Therefore I will take you away, carrying you, and will forsake you..... and I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and perpetual shame which shall never be forgotten." (Jerem. xxiii, 21, 39, 40.)

"He who is to be raised to the sublimity of the priesthood," says St. Thomas, "must be exalted and elevated by divine power above the natural order of things," because he is chosen to be the sanctifier of the people and the vicar of Jesus Christ. In him, however, who usurps so high a dignity, the words of the Wise Man shall be verified: "Postquam elevatus est in sublimi, stultus apparuit." (Prov. xxx, 32.) Had he remained in the world, he might perhaps have been a virtuous layman; but having entered the priesthood without a divine vocation, he will be an unworthy priest, and instead of promoting the interests of religion, he will do great harm to the

Church. Of such priests the Roman Catechism says: "Hujusmodi hominum genere nihil infelicius, nihil calamitosius Ecclesiæ esse potest." (De sacr. Ord.) Indeed, what good can be expected from him who has entered the sanctuary without a vocation from God? "Impossibile est," says St. Leo, "ut bono peragantur exitu, quæ sunt malo inchoata principio." Hence St. Bernard says that "he who has not lawfully entered into the sanctuary will continue to be unfaithful, and instead of procuring the salvation of souls, he will be the cause of their death and their perdition." (Decl., c. 7.)

These sacrilegious intruders shall toil, but God will not accept their labors. Instead of being rewarded they shall be punished, because they did not enter the sanctuary by the door.

"Labor stultorum affliget eos qui nesciunt in urbem pergere." (Eccl. x, 15.) The Church, says St. Leo, receives only those whom the Lord chooses, and by his election makes fit to be his ministers: "Eos ecclesia accipit quos Spiritus Sanctus præparaverit; et dignatio cœlestis gratiæ gignit."—(In die assumpt, suæ.)

The Church, on the other hand, says St. Peter Damian, rejects those whom God has not called; for, instead of promoting her welfare, they only disfigure and ruin her members; instead of edifying her children, they only contaminate and destroy them. "Nemo deterius ecclesiam lædit, cum non eos vocet Dominus." (Opusc, 2, contra cler., c. 2.) "Quos elegerit (Dominus) appropinquabunt ei." (Num. xvi, 5.) God will gladly admit into his presence all those whom he has called to the priesthood, and he will cast off those whom he has not chosen. St. Ephrem regards him as lost who dares enter the priesthood with-

out a vocation: "I am astounded," says he, "at the madness of those who are so presumptuous as to perform the functions of the priesthood without having the grace for it from Jesus Christ. Unhappy wretches! they do not consider that, by doing so, they are preparing for themselves everlasting torments." (De Sac.) And Peter de Blois has written: "Usurpati ausus sacerdotii sacrificium in sacrilegium, vitam convertit in mortem." He who errs in his vocation, says St. Alphonsus, exposes himself to greater danger than if he transgressed a particular precept. If he violates a particular command, he may rise from his fall, and walk in the right path, but he who errs in his vocation, mistakes the very way itself. Hence the longer he travels on the wrong route, the farther he goes from his home. To him we may justly apply the words of St. Augustine: "Bene curris, sed extra viam."

What, then, has he to do who has been ordained without a divine vocation? Must he look upon himself as lost? Must he give himself up to despair? God forbid. St. Gregory asks the same question: "Sacerdos sum non vocatus, quid faciendum?" He answers: "Jngemiscendum." Behold what such a priest must do, if he wishes to be saved. *Jngemiscendum:* he must weep and seek to appease the anger of God by tears of repentance. He must, as St. Bernard says, endeavor to attain, after his ordination, the sanctity of life which ought to precede it. "Siquidem vitæ sanctitas non præcesserit, saltem sequatur." (Ep. 27, ad Ardut.) He must change his conduct, his conversation and his pursuits. "Bonas fac," continues the saint, "de cætero vias tuas, et studia tua." (Ibid.) If he is ignorant, he must study; if he has

spent his time in worldly conversations and amusements, he must spend it henceforth in meditations, spiritual reading and visits to the Blessed Sacraments. To be able to do all this, he must do violence to himself. As he has entered the sanctuary without a divine vocation, he is but a dislocated member. He will therefore work out his salvation only with great difficulty and great labor. Habert and the Continuator of Tournely say: Let such a one pray, and by his prayers he will obtain the assistance which he does not deserve. "Deus tunc ex misericordia ea homini largitur auxilia, quæ legitime vocatis ex qualicumque justitia debet." This is in accordance with the doctrine of the Council of Trent: "Deus impossibilia non jubet, sed jubendo monet et facere quod possis, et petere quod no possis, et adjuvat ut possis." (Sess. 6, c. 13.)

CHAPTER XI.

States of Life.—The Third Order of St. Francis.

Not long ago a priest said in an instruction which he gave to nuns, that the first and most perfect state of life is the married; next to this in perfection is the ecclesiastical state, and the lowest in perfection is the religious state.

Another priest said in an instruction which he gave to young women, that there are but two states of life—the married and the religious. Some of the young women who had no vocation to either, remarked: "What will then become of us? Must we go to the devil?" Another priest said in his instruction to young women that there was no place in heaven for old maids.

The inexcusable ignorance of such priests has induced me to insert this chapter on the different states of life.

It is the duty of the pastor to induce his flock to lead a life of perfection. Now, the perfection of man, says St. Thomas, consists in being united with God—his last end, for whom he was created. But it is principally charity that unites us to God. "For he that abideth in charity," says St. John, "abideth in God, and God in him." (I. John iv, 16.) "He that loveth not abideth in death." (I. John iii, 14.) Christian perfection, therefore, consists in charity. Hence St. Paul says: "Above all have charity, which is the bond of perfection." (Col. iii, 14.) Charity binds all virtues in perfect unity.

To be a perfect Christian, then, is to have true Chris-

tian charity, and to have true charity is to be a perfect Christian. Perfection and charity, therefore, are but one and the same thing.

Now, Jesus Christ has shown three ways to practise charity, which are so many ways of going to God and be saved. The first is that of keeping the commandments, for all men must keep them in order to be saved. "Good master," said a young man to our Saviour, "what good shall I do that I may have life everlasting? Jesus said to him: If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." (Matt. xix, 21.)

The second way of going to God is that of the counsels, which consists in adding to the way of the commandments, the practice of the three great virtues of the Evangelical counsels—*voluntary poverty*, *perpetual chastity*, and *entire obedience* to a spiritual superior.

Our Lord proposes the counsels as a more excellent way than that of the commandments; but he does not make this way obligatory; he simply holds it out to generous souls who wish to consecrate their whole life to the service of God.

The third way is that of celibacy, or of virginity in the world.

Thus we have three states of life—marriage, celibacy, and religious life. These states of life are all venerable and holy, but not equally perfect if considered in themselves, or as a means of salvation and sanctification.

Celibacy or virginity is more perfect than marriage. "He that is without a wife is solicitous of the things that belong to the Lord; but he that has a wife is solicitous of the things of the world, and how he may please his wife." (I. Cor. vii, 32, 33.)

"*Virginity*," *says the catechism of the Council of Trent*, "*is highly recommended in Holy Scripture, and counselled to every one, because it is more profitable, and fuller of holiness and perfection than the marriage state.*" The Catholic Church has solemnly excommunicated "any one who asserts that it is not a better and a more blessed thing to remain in virginity or celibacy than be united in matrimony." (Council of Trent, Sess. xxiv, Can. 10.)

Those who have lost faith in Jesus Christ, faith in the holy Catholic Church, and have become gross in their minds, of "the earth earthy," deplore the lot of the women who, for good reasons, do not wish to become wives and mothers in the natural order, and call them contemptuously "old maids,"—a miserable relic of heathenism or Protestantism, neither of which has anything to hold out to old maids. But Jesus Christ has provided for them better than those faithless people can understand. No doubt the married state is a holy state. In the Church of Christ it receives, from its character as sacrament, a certain degree of perfection; but all that it gains from that dignity is only greater stability and more abundant graces to overcome the difficulties and dangers which surround it. There are, among married persons, such as have reached a high degree of perfection; yet their state does not call for any higher perfection than that which is essential to charity, and which is required by the profession of the Christian religion. A few rare cases excepted—when, for instance, the public good of a whole country is concerned, or when a man, under promise of marriage, has brought shame and disgrace upon a young woman—marriage is neither commanded nor counselled. It is not commanded; for,

"at present," says the catechism of the Council of Trent, "since the human race is sufficiently multiplied, there is no command ordaining marriage." Nor is marriage counselled; because it is but an action of inferior goodness. "As to the married state," wrote St. Alphonsus to a young man, "I cannot counsel it to you, since St. Paul does not counsel it to any one, except to those who cannot observe chastity:" and, even on these, marriage is obligatory only when they do not wish to make use of prayer and the sacraments as means against relapses. Since, then, there is neither a command nor a counsel for any one to spend even one hour in marriage, parents have no right to compel a child to marry; nor has any one a right to say that a person, who does not feel called to the religious life, is obliged to marry.

St. Thomas Aquinas says that, as to the nature of the body, all men are equal among themselves: a servant is not inferior to his master nor a child to his parent. Hence no man can reasonably be compelled either to marry or to lead a single life for other men's or his own father's pleasure.

Virginity, however, is counselled in the Gospel. Something, to be a matter of counsel, must be better than the opposite work. As virginity is opposed to, and better than, marriage, it is counselled in Holy Scripture. After our Lord had spoken on the subject of marriage, the Apostles said to him: "If the case of a man with his wife be so, it is not expedient to marry." (Matt. xix, 10.) Our Lord approved of this conclusion, and declared that there are men who, for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, can devote themselves to a life of perpetual continence: "He that can take it, let him take it." (Ibid. v, 12.)

Speaking on the subject of virginity, St. Paul says: "I have no commandment of the Lord: but I give counsel, so I think it is good to be in that state. . . . He that is without a wife, is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God. . . . And so the unmarried woman and the virgin think of the things of the Lord, that they may be holy both in body and spirit. . . . In short, he that marries, does well; he that marries not, does better. . . . And if her husband die, a woman is at liberty to marry another, only in the Lord. But more blessed shall she be if she remain a widow, according to my counsel." (I. Cor. vii. 25.) And when he recommends marriage as a means of removing the danger of sin, he explains himself in these very clear terms: "I speak this by indulgence, not by commandment; for I would that all men were even as myself," that is, practise perfect chastity. (I. Cor. vii, 6.)

Although virginity is better than marriage, yet it is not commanded. "As to virgins," says St. Paul, "I have no command of the Lord" for them to lead a life of celibacy. Had our Lord commanded virginity, he would have seemed to condemn marriage and deprive men of the means to keep up their race. He also would have made it impossible to have virgins. It is, therefore, not surprising that he only taught us an angelic life, without forcing it on any one. He did not condemn those who do not feel courage enough to embrace the state of virginity; but, by leaving the life of virginity to our free choice, he has opened a glorious career of life to those who have courage enough to embrace it.

Virginity, which was regarded as a reproach, became

an honor under the Christian law. Those women who do not wish to be wives and mothers in the natural order, may be both, in the spiritual order, if they will, and are properly educated for it. They can be wedded to the Holy Spirit, and be the mothers of minds and hearts. The holy virgins and devout widows who have consecrated themselves to God, in or out of religious orders, are both, and fulfil, in the spiritual order, their proper destiny. We hold them in high honor, because they become mothers to the motherless, to the poor, to the forsaken, to the homeless. They instruct the ignorant, nurse the sick, help the helpless, tend the aged, catch the last breath of the dying, pray for the unbelieving and the cold-hearted, and elevate the moral tone of society, and shed a cheering radiance along the pathway of life. They have no need to be idle or useless. In a world of so much sin and sorrow, sickness and suffering, there is always work enough for them to do; it is on the poor and motherless, the destitute and the down-trodden, the sinful and the sorrowful, the aged and the infirm, the ignorant and the neglected, that, under proper direction, they can lavish the wealth of their affections, the tenderness of their hearts, and the ardor of their charity, and find true joy and happiness in so doing, ample scope for woman's noblest ambition, and chances enough to acquire merit in the sight of heaven, and true glory, that will shine brighter and brighter forever.

The religious life is the most perfect of the three. Religion consists in offering supreme worship and honor to God. Hence it is that all those who by the perpetual vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, consecrate their whole lives to the service of the Lord,—who sacrifice to

his honor and glory their senses, mind and heart, are called religious.

The first obligation of the religious life is the practice of voluntary poverty, which is the foundation of the religious life.

Our Lord's answer to the young man who said, "From my youth I have kept all the commandments. What is wanting to me ?" was: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." (Matt. xix, 21.) "Peter answering, said to him: Behold we have *left all things*, and have followed thee; what therefore shall we have ? And Jesus said to them: Amen, I say to you, that you who have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the seat of his Majesty, you also shall sit on twelve seats judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And *every one* that hath left house, or brethren, or father, or mother, or lands, for my name's sake, and for the Gospel, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall possess life everlasting." (Matt. xix, 29.) "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. v, 3.)

Our Lord says also: "The care of this world and the illusion of riches suffocate the word of God." (Matt. xiii, 23.) "A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. xix, 23, 24.) "Woe to you that are rich; for you have your consolation in this world." (Luke vi, 24.)

Now, these awful declarations lose their terrors, and the soul is relieved from the dangerous burden of riches

and the constant solicitude of temporal affairs, so as to be able to walk freely in the way of perfection by keeping the vow of voluntary poverty.

Besides poverty, perpetual chastity is also necessary for the religious life. The religious is bound to abstain from all kinds of carnal delectation, for such a carnal pleasure would be an obstacle to the faithful service of the Lord and to his own salvation.

Obedience is also indispensably necessary to a religious life. Those who study a science or learn a profession, are obliged to conform to the instructions and will of their master. Now, religion being a school of all moral virtues and perfections, the religious of every Order must obey their superior in imitation of Jesus Christ who obeyed his heavenly Father in all things, even unto death.

However, the practice of these three virtues is not sufficient for the religious life. All theologians say with St. Thomas that vows also are necessary for the religious life, because the religious life essentially consists in them, and that without vows it could not be a state of perfection. A state implies stability and permanence. Hence a state of perfection necessarily supposes a perpetual obligation to practise what perfection requires.

Now, it is by vows that this perpetual obligation to perfection is contracted, and by them the religious life is a state of perfection. "Whoever puts his hand to the plough and looks back is not fit for the kingdom of heaven." (Luke ix, 62.) If religious were at liberty to return to the world, they would no longer belong to God in the same degree of perfection. They might offer him a meritorious sacrifice in other good works; but unless

the victim is completely consumed, the holocaust is not perfect.

Vows are, therefore, absolutely necessary for the faithful observance of poverty, chastity, and obedience, which are the principal obligations of the religious life.

"Why is it," asks St. Thomas, "that bishops live in a state of perfection, whilst secular priests do not?" The reason is because when bishops accept the dignity of the episcopacy, their consecration imposes a solemn obligation on them to feed their flock and protect them even at the peril of their life; they solemnly promise to fulfil all the duties of good pastors; but the good pastor lays down his life for his flock, and to sacrifice one's life for others is the highest degree of Christian charity. Bishops, therefore, as they are in a state of perfection, cannot resign their pastoral charge without the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff. Secular priests and deans, however, though they have charge of souls are not *always obliged* to take care of souls, but may disengage themselves from this care, and resign that charge with the bishop's permission. For this reason secular priests and deans are not in a state of perfection.

Bishops are even in a higher state of perfection than religious are. Religious often accept the episcopacy, and if the episcopacy were not a higher degree of the state of perfection, they would renounce a more perfect state of life in becoming bishops. Religious, it is true, by making the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, put themselves in the state of perfection; but these counsels are only means of perfection, and counsels are not so obligatory as the formal precepts of the state of the episcopacy.

Now, though we say that the religious of all orders and the prelates of the Church are in the state of perfection, yet we do not mean to say that they consider themselves perfect, but we say so, because they bind themselves in conscience by a public profession to become perfect. St. Paul says, "Not that I have already attained to perfection, but I pursue my course, if by any means I can attain it through Jesus Christ." (Philip. iii, 12.)

From what has been said, it will be easy to see the difference between the perfection of a secular person and that of a religious. A person in the world may be more perfect than a religious is; yet, for that he is not in the state of perfection, while a religious really is in it. The perfection of a secular person, as it is not confirmed and supported by vows, has not that stability and constancy in good, which that of a religious has. The religious feels himself bound under pain of mortal sin to aim at perfection and increase in it, but a person in the world does not feel himself so bound. Hence it often happens, that a person in the world leads a pure and a holy life to-day, and to-morrow he relents.

One day a holy man was asked whether a person in the world could acquire Christian perfection. "Of course he can," said he; "but I like one degree of grace in religion better than two in the world, because in religion we are separated from the world—the great enemy of grace; we are continually excited to virtue by good example, and therefore grace is easily increased and preserved, whilst in the world it is very easily lost, at least very hard to be preserved."

Hence it is a great error to say, "I do not see why I

cannot lead a holy life as easily in the world as in the convent." It is true, you may experience a certain fervor of devotion in the world ; you may go often to confession and communion ; you may withdraw yourself far from the occasions of sin ; but it is also true that you are not under strict obedience to any one, nor under a perpetual obligation to practise what perfection requires ; it is true that you meet everywhere with obstacles to piety, and therefore it is also true that to-day you will neglect one exercise of devotion and to-morrow another ; to-day you will dispense yourself from going to confession and holy Communion, and to-morrow you will distract yourself in company ; and at length you will find yourself full of deliberate faults, perhaps even in the state of mortal sin. It is not so in religion, for a religious is not at liberty to dispense himself from his spiritual exercises, nor to disengage himself from the obligations which he has contracted by his vows which form that triple cord of which the Wise Man says " that it is very difficult to break it." (Eccles. iv, 12.)

The religious life is in itself only of counsel, a gift offered to the free choice of those who have to decide on a state of life ; but it may become an obligation in a case where a person cannot save his soul except by using this great means of salvation.

Now, though there is nothing more holy, more beautiful, or more meritorious than to follow the Evangelical counsels and to embrace the religious life, yet no one should take this step without the grace of divine vocation. The divine vocation is known : (1.) By a constant attraction founded on motives of reason and faith to lead a religious life. (2.) By the qualities requisite for fulfill-

ing the obligations which are to be contracted and the dispositions for fulfilling them. (3.) By the moral possibility of leaving the world, or the absence of serious obstacles. (4.) By the consent of a prudent and wise director.

When the time has arrived for young persons to choose a state of life, whether the married, the single, the ecclesiastical or religious state, the priest should, if necessary, give them proper advice. In giving advice on so important a subject, he should not be guided by merely human motives and self-interest, but by the vocation of God. "Some ignorant confessors," says St. Alphonsus, "tell their penitents who wish to become religious that in the choice of a state of life they should obey their parents and abandon their vocation if their parents object to their entering religion. These confessors adopt the opinion of Luther, who taught that a person sins by entering religion without the consent of his parents. But the doctrine of Luther has been rejected by the Church. The Tenth Council of Toledo decreed that children who are fourteen years old, may lawfully enter religion even against the will of their parents.

A child is bound to obey his parents in what regards his education and the government of the house; but with regard to the choice of a state of life, he should obey God by embracing the state to which God calls him. When parents seek to be obeyed in this matter, we must answer them in the words of the Apostles to the princes of the Jews: "Si justum est in conspectu Dei vos potius audire quam Deum, judicate." (Act. iv, 19.)

St. Thomas expressly teaches (2. 2. q. 10. a. 5.) that in the choice of a state of life, children are not obliged

to obey their parents. And the saint says that when there is question of a vocation to religion, a person is not bound even to consult his relatives; for on such occasions, self-interest changes relatives into enemies: "Propinqui enim carnis in hoc negotio amici non sunt, sed inimici, juxta sententiam Domini; inimici hominis domestici ejus." (2. 2. q. 189, a. 10.) Parents are, as St. Bernard says, content to see their children damned with them, rather than see them saved by entering religion and separating from the family. "O durum patrem! O sævam matrem! quorum consolatio mors filii est: qui malunt nos perire cum eis quam regnare sine eis." (Epist. 111.) But when a person wishes to enter the sacerdotal state, in which he may be able to serve the family, what efforts do not his parents make to procure his ordination, either by lawful or unlawful means, whether he is called or not called to the priesthood? And with what severity do they not treat him if, through remorse of conscience, he refuse to take holy orders? Barbarous fathers! Let us, with St. Bernard, call them not parents but murderers! "Non parentes, sed peremptores." Unhappy fathers! miserable children! I say again. How many shall we see condemned in the valley of Josephat for having interfered with the vocation of others, or for not having attended to their own?

Parents, therefore, should remember:

First, that children are the gift of God; that God is their supreme master; that as he has a right to call them out of this life at any moment he pleases, so he can also call them to whatever state of life he pleases. No father or mother can dispute this right of God without being an execrable blasphemer.

Secondly, let parents remember that the power they have over children is delegated to them by God for the purpose of using it especially for the spiritual welfare of children.

Therefore, if God commands one thing and a parent the contrary, no one can doubt that the power or jurisdiction of such a parent ceases, because it is opposed to the will of him who gave such power. "He who loveth father or mother more than me," says Jesus Christ, "is not worthy of me." It is better to incur the displeasure of our parents than that of God.

Let parents, therefore, never abuse their authority by unjustly opposing a child who is called by God to a state of higher perfection, nor by forbidding a child to marry, to become a religious, or a priest, or to lead a single life.

Many parents object to their sons, and more especially to their daughters, leaving them, because, as they say, they cannot spare them from home. It is perfectly true that, where a child is absolutely necessary to the life or livelihood of a parent, filial piety bars the vocation, at least for the time being. But a mere sentimental, imaginary necessity, strong and passionate feelings, and even the great convenience and value of the child's services at home are not sufficient motives to warrant a parent in refusing consent, when it seems otherwise clear that God is calling the soul to serve him in another state of life. As God has provided abundant graces for every one in the path to which he calls him, it would be the height of cruelty on the part of parents, if, for their own personal gratification or for some imaginary benefit, they were to deprive their children of these graces and of their

fruits both in this life and in the next. The parent may experience a brief joy in retaining his child or in constraining his course; but it will be short-lived pleasure, and must end in sorrow and regrets. Catholic doctrine upon this subject is very clear. St. Alphonsus, in his "Moral Theology," (lib. iv., n. 77) teaches that "it must be held, with the common opinion of theologians, that parents are guilty of mortal sin who, by threatening, or frightening, or deceiving their children, or by imploring them and holding out promises to them, seek to induce them to give up their vocation." He says that they are guilty of two sins: the one against charity, for a reason which is obvious; and the other against parental piety; for they are bound, under pain of mortal sin, to educate their children and to attend to their spiritual welfare. They may be excused from grievous sin, at least for a time, on account of inadvertence, which may often exist where strong natural affections are called into play, or on account of their ignorance of their duty.

"A person who dissuades even a stranger from following a religious vocation, is guilty of a grievous sin." The reason of this is given in the chapter treating of the motives for following the divine calling to a state of perfection.

It will not be amiss here to say a few words on the Third Order of St. Francis of Assisi.

No doubt, there are many persons in the world who have a great desire to lead a holy life, and yet are not called to the religious life. These persons are advised by Pope Leo XIII. to become, if possible, practicable members of the Third Order of St. Francis of Assisi. On the 17th of September he issued an Encyclical Letter to all

the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops and Bishops of the Catholic world in the Grace and Communion of the Apostolic See, exhorting them to encourage the propagation of the Third Order of St. Francis.

When the world had become Christian and Catholics grew rich and forgot the poor life of Jesus Christ, God called St. Francis to teach the love of Christian poverty to voluptuous Catholics.

"So powerful were his words and example," says Pope Leo XIII., "that it is impossible to express the enthusiasm with which the multitude flocked to St. Francis. Wherever he went he was followed by an immense concourse; and in the largest cities as in the smallest towns, it was a common occurrence for men of every state of life to come and beg of him to be admitted to his rule.

"Such were the reasons for which the saint determined to institute the brotherhood of the Third Order, which was to admit all ranks, all ages, both sexes, and yet in no way necessitate the rupture of family or social ties. For its rules consist only in obedience to God and his Church; in avoiding factions and quarrels, and in not defrauding our neighbor in any way; in taking up arms only for the defence of our religion and for one's country; in being moderate in food and in clothing; in shunning luxury, and in abstaining from the dangerous seductions of dances and plays.

"It is easy to understand what immense advantages must have flowed from an institution of this kind, as salutary in itself as it was admirably adapted to the times.

"In fact, from the lowest ranks to the highest, there prevailed an enthusiasm and a generous and eager ardor to be affiliated to this Franciscan Order. Amongst others,

king Louis IX. of France, and St. Elizabeth of Hungary, sought this honor; and, in the course of centuries, several Sovereign Pontiffs, Cardinals, Bishops, Kings, and Princes have not deemed the Franciscan badges derogatory to their dignity. The associates of the Third Order displayed always as much courage as piety in the defence of the Catholic religion; and if their virtues were objects of hatred to the wicked, they never lacked the approbation of the good and wise, which is the greatest and only desirable honor. More than this, our Predecessor, Gregory IX., publicly praised their faith and courage; nor did he hesitate to shelter them with his authority, and to call them, as a mark of honor, "*Soldiers of Christ, new Machabees:*" and deservedly so. For the public welfare found a powerful safeguard in that body of men who, guided by the virtues and rules of their founder, applied themselves to revive Christian morality as far as lay in their power to restore it to its ancient place of honor in the state. Certain it is, that to them and their example it was often due that the rivalries of parties were quenched or softened, arms were torn from the furious hands that grasped them, the causes of litigation and dispute were suppressed, consolation was brought to the poor and the abandoned, and luxury, that gulf of fortunes and instrument of corruption, was subdued. And thus domestic peace, incorrupt morality, gentleness of behavior, the legitimate use and preservation of private wealth, civilization and social stability, spring as from a root from the Franciscan Third Order; and it is in great measure to St. Francis that Europe owes their preservation.

"And in our day, the favorers and propagators of

Materialism have increased, who obstinately deny that submission to the Church is due, and thence proceeding gradually beyond all bounds, do not even spare the civil power; they approve of violence and sedition among the people, they attempt agrarian outbreaks, they flatter the desires of the proletariate, and they weaken the foundations of domestic and public order.

"In these many and so great miseries, you well know, venerable brethren, that no small alleviation is to be found in the institutes of St. Francis, if only they are brought back to their pristine state; for if they only were in a flourishing condition, faith and piety, and every Christian virtue would easily flourish; the lawless desire for perishing things would be broken; nor would men refuse to have their desires ruled by virtue, though that seems to many to be a most hateful burden. Men bound together by the bonds of true fraternal concord would mutually love one another, and would give that reverence which is becoming to the poor and distressed, as bearing the image of Christ. Besides, those who are thoroughly imbued with the Christian religion feel a conviction that those who are in legitimate authority are to be obeyed for conscience' sake, and that in nothing is any one to be injured.

"Than this disposition of mind nothing is more efficacious to extinguish utterly every vice of this kind, whether violence, injuries, desire for revolution, hatred among the different ranks of society, in all which vices the beginnings and the weapons of socialism are found. Lastly, the question that politicians so laboriously aim at solving, namely, the relation which exists between the rich and poor, would be thoroughly solved if they held this

as a fixed principle, viz., that poverty is not wanting in dignity; that the rich should be merciful and munificent, and the poor content with their lot and labor; and since neither was born for these changeable goods, the one is to attain heaven by patience, the other by liberality.

"For these reasons it has been long and specially our desire that every one should, to the utmost of his power, aim at imitating St. Francis of Assisi; therefore, as hitherto we have always bestowed special care upon the Third Order of St. Francis, so now, being called by the supreme mercy of God to the office of Sovereign Pontiff, since thereby we can most opportunely do the same, we exhort Christian men not to refuse to enrol themselves in this sacred army of Jesus Christ. Many are those who everywhere of both sexes have already begun to walk in the footsteps of the Seraphic Father with courage and alacrity, whose zeal we praise and specially commend, so that, venerable brethren, we desire that by your endeavors especially it may be increased and extended to many. And the special point which we commend is that those who have adopted the insignia of *penance* shall look to the image of its most holy founder and strive to imitate him, without which the good that they would expect would be futile. Therefore take pains that the people may become acquainted with the Third Order and truly esteem it; provide that those who have the care of souls sedulously teach what it is, how easily any one may enter it, with how great privileges tending to salvation it abounds, what advantages, public and private, it promises.

"And now, as a pledge of celestial favors and in

proof of our special good will, we impart most lovingly in the Lord to you, venerable brethren, and to all the clergy and the flock committed to each of you, the Apostolic Benediction.

"Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, the 17th day of September, 1882, and in the fifth year of Our Pontificate.

"LEO PP. XIII."

The following Pastoral by Leo XIII., when Bishop of Perugia, will be read with interest, as showing how he promoted while in Perugia the Third Order, and how he desired to see it established in every parish :—

"We cannot doubt that God, who desired St. Francis to institute this Third Order for the amendment of morals, the support of the faith, and the preservation of concord, desires at the present time to make use of it for the renewal of Christian perfection in the faithful. Neither is this merely our opinion, but rather that of many eminent personages. Jean-Marie Vianney, the late Curé of Ars so renowned for his sanctity, used to say that the revival and propagation of the Third Order in France was ordained by divine wisdom for the salvation of civil and religious liberty. The illustrious Monseigneur de Ségur, showing the power of sanctification inherent in the Third Order, affirms that the hopes of the Christian world are founded upon it. The Catholic Congresses held in Italy of late years have expressed their desires to see the order of Penance spreading wider and wider, knowing that from it emanates a most efficacious power for the triumph of the Church of Christ over her enemies. Yet, what is of more importance, our most Holy Father Pius IX., in his brief to the editor of the *Annali Francescani*, confesses that he also cherishes

the same hope which comforts many of the faithful, that from this institution will arise the remedy for the evils which oppress human society.

"Therefore we, who have always entertained a special love for the brethren of the Third Order, and, after obtaining from the Sovereign Pontiff the faculty of directing the primary congregation of that Order, have found our love for them increased, again and again exhort the parish priests of our city and diocese to plant and diligently cultivate in their parishes this excellent tree, which produces the most precious fruit. Indeed, whilst making the visitation of our diocese, we found, with immense joy to our soul, that where the Third Order had been planted it has already yielded abundant fruit; for with the eradication, or at least with the diminution, of vice, and the amelioration of morals, a firmer faith reigns in those places, charity increases, the practice of good works is promoted; and the faithful instructed in the divine wisdom of Christ, more easily and securely escape the snares of the perfidious, who are working with all their might to withdraw Christians from the bosom of the Church and obedience to the Roman Pontiff.

"Accordingly we exhort as forcibly as possible all pastors of souls to employ every care and diligence in propagating this Seraphic Order amongst their flocks, explaining to the people, either privately or publicly, its excellence, its facility, its advantages. Its excellence, indeed, since it had for its author the most illustrious Francis of Assisi, a man worthy to be compared with the Seraphim, a man most beloved of Christ, whom he resembled most perfectly; since amongst its members there are so great a number renowned for their piety and

learning; since it has had so many and so great admirers and panegyrists, especially among the Roman Pontiffs, who have enriched it with most singular privileges and indulgences. Its facility, in the second place, that the faithful may not refuse to join the Order through prejudice or fear of imaginary difficulties, when persuaded that it was expressly instituted by St. Francis for those who are obliged to live in the world, and therefore does not impose any obligation on its members, whilst it strives and promotes amongst them the observance of the divine commandments and the precepts of the Church by means of the practice of good works. Lastly, let them show forth its advantages and utility, seeing that the Third Order restores peace, tranquillity, and all virtues to domestic and civil society.

"We give notice to the parish priests of our city that the Third Order has been for some time already legally established here, in the Church of the Oratory of St. Philip. Let it be known to all that it is our desire that this congregation should make daily fresh progress by increasing the number of its members, by appropriate discourses at the monthly meetings of both sexes, and by a most careful observance of the rules of the Order. And to this effect it is necessary that all who are called to take a share with us in the burden of pastoral solicitude, should unite with us in this work perseveringly and untiringly, as a result of which, they may be most sure, they will co-operate efficaciously in restoring or preserving to their flocks true morality and integrity of faith.

"*Given at Perugia, Jan. 12th*, 1877.

"JOACHIM, CARDINAL BISHOP."

What better eulogy can be bestowed upon the Third Order of St. Francis than is contained in the Encyclical and Pastoral Letter of Pope Leo XIII. ? Indeed, if the advantages of being a member of this Order were not extraordinarily great, so many illustrious personages would not have joined it. At least one hundred and thirty-four emperors, queens, princes and dukes belonged to the Third Order. Among the Popes are Gregory IX., Julius II., Leo X., Sixtus V., Paul V., Pius VI., Pius IX., as well as the Pontiff who at present so happily occupies the Chair of St. Peter. St. Ignatius Loyola, says *Les Annales Catholiques*, and St. Vincent de Paul wore the cord of St. Francis.

Moreover, the Franciscan Order has given the Church 3,000 bishops, and 3,000 saints or beatified persons, of whom 1,700 are martyrs.

No one who is acquainted with the Third Order of St. Francis and its true spirit can doubt that those who join it and live up to its spirit will sanctify themselves and die a holy death. What we have said, in the volume "Devotion of the Holy Rosary" of the advantages of being a member of a confraternity approved by the Church applies especially to the Third Order of St. Francis.

In this Order, moreover, many indulgences may be easily obtained by its members. We have shown, in volume "Holy Eucharist and Penance," p. 537 to 539, and p. 553 to 577, how important it is to avail ourselves of this means to cancel temporal punishments still due to our sins after the eternal punishment has been remitted.

Any one who wishes to become a member of the Third Order of St. Francis must apply either to a Franciscan

or Capuchin Father, or to a priest who has been empowered by a Father Provincial of the Franciscans to receive persons into the Third Order. This power is easily obtained. The priest, then, who receives you blesses for you what is called the "Seraphic Cord" of St. Francis, which you must wear as a condition to share in all the spiritual advantages of the Franciscan Order. The Rules of the Third Order are not obligatory under pain of sin, not even of venial sin. They consist, as Pope Leo XIII. says, in obedience to God and his Church, in living up to the spirit of St. Francis.

Happy the priest who is a practical member of the Third Order of St. Francis and introduces it into his parish. This Order will be a tree of life, bearing fruits of various kinds for the cure of all spiritual diseases and for the prevention of all kinds of disorders.

CHAPTER XII.

The Desire of a Secular Priest to Embrace the Religious State.

The marks of a vocation to a state of life, as we have seen, are *aptitude* and *attraction.* However, it may sometimes happen that a vocation made manifest by these marks is altogether over-ruled by the interests of God's glory. Nothing can be better or more meritorious than a life ordered "ad majorem Dei gloriam." Hence we must pay more attention to the greater honor and glory of God than to the excellence of the state of life itself.

The famous Countess Matilda wished to abandon the world and enter a convent, there to give herself up to a life of contemplation and prayer. But when St. Gregory heard of her intention, he forbade her to carry it into execution. He knew that she could render greater service to God and his Church by the use of her influence and power in the world than by embracing the higher state of life to which she aspired, So it may happen from time to time that God's glory will require that men and women should remain in the world, whose *aptitude* and *attraction* are for the religious or ecclesiastical state. But decision in this matter demands great prudence, and should be come to only when confirmed by the counsel of a truly enlightened and spiritual person. The advice which is often tendered by those good but worldly persons, whose judgments are swayed by human motives and

governed by human prudence, should be treated with the greatest suspicion.

No one, therefore, can doubt that the vocation to the religious state, though indicated by aptitude and attraction, may be set aside by positive laws of the Church. Now, the constitutions of the Pontifical colleges, and the missionary oath which the canon law requires of all priests ordained in America and elsewhere, ad titulum missionis, impose a grave obligation not to enter a religious order or congregation. And yet the "state" of a priest who is also a religious is higher and holier in itself than that of a priest who is not a religious; for the religious has contracted an obligation to observe three of the Evangelical Counsels of Perfection in perpetuity, whereas the simple priest has not. One of the oldest colleges in Rome is the German College. Its first constitutions were drawn up by St. Ignatius himself, and they were confirmed in a bull by Pope Gregory XIII., beginning, "*Ex Collegio Germanico.*" This bull prescribes the very form of oath to be taken by each student after he has been six months in the college, and it obliges him to accept and observe the superior's interpretation of the rules, to take Orders when called, to serve the Mission in Germany, and never to enter any religious order or congregation. There were not wanting persons who, in their zeal for the religious state, dared to criticise the Pope and to attack the oath, saying that it was opposed to the glory of God and to the spiritual welfare of those who took it. But the learned Father Cordara, in his commentary upon the rule and constitutions of this celebrated college, undertook its defence. "If you look closely into the matter," he says, "you will

clearly see that, although all religious institutes are more holy than any other state whatsoever beneath that of the episcopacy, they are not more useful to others and to society. Society certainly is more benefited by him who, after the example of the apostles, devotes himself wholly to the salvation of his fellow men, than by him who shuts himself up in certain enclosures to attend to himself alone and his own salvation. Moreover, the constitution of this college does not look to the private sanctification of its students so much as to the public good of the people: and Pope Gregory's design was not to train up within its walls simply a body of holy men, but a body of priests who should be thoroughly apostolic men." And therefore (he continues) it was quite just and proper to put obstacles in the way of their entering religion, more especially when he who raises the obstacles has the power when he thinks fit to remove them.

It may be worth while to add a few words of explanation on the missionary oath taken in this country. For it sometimes happens that very pious, but perhaps not very wise or well instructed persons profess to be shocked when priests who have been ordained ad titulum missionis seek to join a religious order and are finally hindered from doing so by their oath. The instruction issued by the *Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide*, April 27, 1871, describes the men thus ordained as those "qui in arduum apostolici ministerii opus assumuntur," and it say that, "like the student of the Pontifical Colleges, they are bound to take an oath, by which they swear to give themselves up for life to labor in the mission to which they have been or shall be appointed;" and it adds that "the Holy See has regularly exacted this oath in order

to provide for the spiritual good of those missions which educate their clergy ;" and that dispensation from it, in order to enter religion, can be obtained only from the Holy See, which reserves to itself, after hearing the Ordinary, the decision as to whether the necessities of the mission would justify it. "For (continues the Instruction) public interests must be preferred to private interests, on the same principle that the members of certain religious orders are not allowed by the Church to join a stricter Order without the permission of their own superiors."

In other words, the Church legislates for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls. We cannot propose a higher motive to ourselves than this, and to submit to her wise legislation is a high road to sanctity. At the same time I am far from saying that priests who have taken the missionary oath are not sometimes called by God to the religious state.

A strong and irresistible impulse from God towards the religious state, or the conviction that for him personally salvation can be attained only in that state, are reasons which entirely justify, and indeed compel, a priest to seek for a dispensation from his oath. But it must also be borne in mind that the Holy See is fully justified in refusing the dispensation, as she frequently does, and that her refusal may be taken as an authoritative declaration that in spite of private impulse and personal feeling, there is, in the particular case, no divine vocation to the religous state.

The question then may naturally arise, "Are they who, without any fault of their own, are deprived of the opportunity of entering a religious order, thereby de-

prived of the means of attaining that spiritual perfection of which the highest pattern is set before us in the Gospel?" Or, to make the question and answer more comprehensive, "Are those persons who are not called to a religious order, but serve God as simple priests or laymen in the world, unable to lead a life of evangelical perfection?" Note in the first place that in the kingdom of God there are "diversities of graces," "diversities of ministries," and "diversities of operations, but the same God, who worketh in all. And the manifestation of the spirit is given to every man unto profit." (I. Cor. xii, 6, 7.) In this manner, indeed, the different states of life have excellencies and perfections each their own, while the Gospel is the rule and standard of them all. The sanctity and perfection of the soul consist in charity. Charity itself is dependent first on the observance of the Commandments, and then on the practice of counsels. No man can attain to the perfection of charity who does not practise some, at least, of the counsels of the Gospel. There are many counsels of perfection. The frequent and fervent reception of the Sacraments is a counsel of perfection, and one of the principal means of attaining perfection—confession producing purity of soul, and Holy Communion a closer union between the soul and his divine majesty. The greater degree of fervor with which the Commandments are observed; the more intense purity of intention we cultivate; the turning the left cheek to the striker who has smitten us on the right; the choosing the lowest place; the giving of large alms or all we possess; the spending long hours in prayer; the mortification of our body by fasting, and many other acts of virtue are

counsels of the Gospel and of perfection. But among all the counsels there are three which are called emphatically "the Evangelical Counsels." The profession and practice of these three Evangelical Counsels—Voluntary Poverty, Perpetual Chastity and Entire Obedience—are of the essence of a religious order. No religious order can exist without them; and their members have the great additional profit, merit and blessing of binding themselves to their observance for life. But, like prayer and fasting and the frequentation of the Sacraments, these counsels are means and instruments towards the attainment of perfection, not perfection itself. They are indeed most peculiarly efficacious means, practised by our blessed Lord himself, and inculcated by word and example upon his disciples. (Matt. c, 19.)

Note in the second place that they are not the exclusive property of religious orders. The life of perfection which they foster and develop existed long before the formation of those religious associations which we call the religious orders. The Evangelical Counsels are of divine institution; they were practised and spread among the early Christians by the Apostles and their immediate successors.

The religious orders arose after the Church had been forming and perfecting her saints for centuries upon the Gospel pattern of perfection. Bishops and priests, martyrs, confessors and virgins had lived in the world for hundreds of years, faithful as the Apostles themselves had been to the observance of the Evangelical Counsels.

When the religious orders arose they did but gather together and organize the elements which already existed; they made public and solemn profession of a life

which had been lovingly embraced with less of formality and publicity by all who had aspired to the perfection of the Gospel from the days of the Apostles; they raised up walls around enclosures into which those who desired to practise the counsels apart from the world and free from its temptations and allurements might withdraw. The practice of the counsels was always exposed to decay under the corroding and disintegrating influence of the atmosphere of the world. The tendency of human nature to laxity and indulgence augmented the danger in the presence of an adverse public opinion and practice. The religious orders therefore conferred an incalculable benefit on mankind by opening out peaceful retreats and shelters from the world for the practice of the counsels of perfection; by the creation of a public opinion of their own, and by the rules and constitutions which perpetually bound their members together in the pursuit of perfection. They became the examples, witnesses, heralds and preachers of the Evangelical Counsels. They are exclusive in their character, because they exclude from their society all who do not bind themselves to "the three counsels" of perfection. But they are not exhaustive of evangelical perfection in the Church; they claim no monopoly of the counsels; they do not profess to drain the world, still less the priesthood, of every soul that is called by God to the practice of the Gospel counsels.

Unfortunately a different view has gained admittance in some quarters, which has been most disastrous in its effects, not only upon thousands of persons living in the world, but also upon some of the priesthood. And perhaps the very minute and analytical discussion of the question

of vocation, laying greater stress upon the differences than upon the similarities and points in common between different states of life, has somewhat tended to favor and strengthen this view, which starts with a strong alliance upon its side, namely, that of the weakness of human nature and its proclivity to ease and indulgence. Thus, to put it broadly, it is sometimes said that the Evangelical Counsels of Perfection, which the Church teaches us to hold in the highest esteem, belong to the religious orders, and that no one should attempt to practise them unless he or she is prepared to enter an Order.

Indeed, it not unfrequently happens that persons living in the world are made the subject of unsparing criticism because they are known to practise some or all of the Evangelical Counsels : they are reproached for being unlike the world, dressing in black ; wearing poor apparel ; practising poverty in their personal habits ; shunning pleasure parties ; ignoring the fashions—as though these did not govern society—and living under obedience to a rule of life and to a director. Such persons, it is said, are fit only for the cloister : they should be labelled and ticketed off with a religious habit. But the persons who utter these reproaches can be excused from downright worldliness only upon the plea of downright ignorance of the spirit of the Gospel and of the history of the Church from the beginning. The life and writings of St. Jerome and of St. Ambrose and their companions and disciples are evidence of how the counsels of perfection may be practised in private families and in the midst of the world. And every age of the Church has furnished similar evidence. It is no answer to say that the Orders

and Congregations have become so numerous and represent so large a variety of work and attraction, that all who follow the counsels should be transplanted out of this busy or fashionable world into their sacred precincts, There are many persons in the world who are simply unable to become religious. Sometimes it is duty, sometimes health,or age, sometimes poverty that keeps them in the world and closes against them the doors of the Orders. At other times it may be the clear apprehension that God does not call them to a community life, and that they can serve him best by turning their opportunities in the world to his honor and service.

To many of these persons is opened by our Lord the wide field of the Gospel counsels. Voluntary poverty, perpetual mortification and self-denial, and obedience to rule and direction may be their surest way to perfection. We possess, thanks be to God, thousands of holy persons in the world, men and women, married and single, among the poor more than among the rich, whose lives are spent in constant practice of some of the Evangelical Counsels of perfection. The schools they support, the churches they build and maintain, their gifts to God at the altar, their alms to the poor, imply the practice, not of the ordinary virtue of charity, but of the Counsel of Voluntary Poverty in a high degree. They bare themselves of their earnings and of all they possess, except that which is needful for their scanty subsistence, and entrench even upon this in order that, living in the world, they may have lot and honor with the early Christians in the poverty and charity of Christ.

Again, there is the case of ecclesiastical students in our colleges and seminaries, and of some of our diocesan

clergy. They may have no vocation to a religious order, or having a desire to enter one, prior obligations may interfere and bar their way. Yet they may have an ardent desire of perfection and may thirst after the practice of the Evangelical Counsels. May not they adopt these counsels as their own? May they not live up to them, and practise them in all their details, without being considered eccentric and wanting in judgment and Christian sense? Assuredly they may. In the first place, the counsel of Chastity, with all its restraints and precautions, is binding upon them; and about this no more need be said. Next, beyond the practice of the ordinary virtue of obedience to the Church, which is due even from the laity, the ecclesiastic enters into a voluntary and lasting engagement, by his mission oath and again in his ordination, to obey his bishop. He becomes subject to the general ecclesiastical canons, and to the decrees and regulations for life and discipline, which may be laid upon him by his bishop in visitation and extra-synodically as well as in synod. He has thus a rule of life and conduct prescribed for him which he is bound to follow. His renunciation of self-will and his obedience are so far complete. He has ceased to be his own master. His life is consecrated by the strength of a triple obligation to the service of God and of souls. He is bound by the very nature and end of his priesthood—"nemo sibi pontifex;" he is bound by the solemn promise made to his bishop at ordination; and he is bound, moreover, if ordained under the privilege granted to the clergy in this missionary country, by a sacred vow and oath, from which none but the highest authority on earth can release him, to labor for the salvation of souls. This vow, like the vows

of religion, is perpetual, and its duties press upon him as long as he has health and life to discharge them. The following are the words which he pronounces:—Voveo pariter et juro, quod in hac Diocœsi perpetuo in divinis administrandis laborem meum et operam, sub omnimoda directione et jurisdictione R.P.D., pro tempore Ordinarii, pro salute animarum impendam.

Lastly, with regard to the counsel of voluntary poverty, the secular priest is free to embrace it, and he may practise it with all the fidelity observed by religious living on the mission. He is under no obligation; he is free. He is not bound to make this particular counsel the special object of his predilection; but many reasons may lead him to do so; and he may bind himself if he pleases, even by vow, to spend nothing upon himself, upon creature comforts, upon food or furniture, upon amusements and pleasures, beyond that which is absolutely necessary; that is, for the proper discharge of his duties. A priest on the American mission who sets himself to consider in what way he can practise the counsel of voluntary poverty will find a thousand opportunities at his hand in daily life. We are nationally and constitutionally as a people prone to spend. No race is less thrifty in personal expenditure. But that which pastors lose by extravagance or want of care is lost to the poor, to the Church and to Christ. To economise in details, to pinch and save for the purpose of hoarding, is to engender the spirit of the miser; and the Apostle admonishes us in his instruction to Timothy that "the desire of money is the root of all evils" (1 Tim. vi, 10). But when savings are effected, and self-denial is practised from the spirit of holy poverty, the money thus collected is given over to the poor or

to the Church. The poverty of the Gospel is golden, but the poverty of the world is dross.

The diocesan clergy of this country are placed, for the most part, in circumstances which greatly facilitate the practice among them of evangelical poverty. Churches and schools are carried on upon a strain; new spiritual wants are continually arising, and their supply is dependent upon alms as a basis; fresh missions have to be opened, and the calls from all sides upon the priest are perpetual. They who possess something of their own are being continually invited to spend it; they who have but a little are being ever incited to divide even that little, and the less each one retains of his own the more he is reminded of the poverty of our Lord, which Lallemant calls "*the foundation of the apostolic life.*" "Having food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content;" such was the simple teaching of St. Paul when forming the character and mind of the Christian priesthood.

St. Charles, who is the model of the diocesan priesthood, used not unfrequently to remind his clergy of this virtue of poverty, which he practised so rigorously in his own person. On one occasion, speaking to his priests, he asked them: "Do you know how great is the perfection of complete poverty?—how great and valuable the assistance which it renders to fishers of souls?—how strictly the Lord required its observance in those first fishermen, the Apostles, whom he permitted to 'carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes?'" (Hom. cxx.) And elsewhere he said: "Take as your pattern the lives of the holy fathers of old; after the example of the saints, live in such poverty, that what you may have to give for

your churches and the adornment of your altars and other sacred objects may not be merely the overflow of your superfluity, but rather savings stolen by mortification from your necessary maintenance."

Finally, the thought of this noble Christian virtue of poverty, adopted by the Lord as a spouse, not only reconciles many a hard-working, humble diocesan priest to his necessary poverty, but it sweetens his privations, while it fills his mind with peace and content. And if the thought should arise that in his old age or sickness the doors of no well-provided community or home will be opened to receive him, and that he can look forward to none but a scanty allowance upon which to eke out his remnant of life, so far from being dejected, he will rejoice the more, in the poverty of him who "being rich became poor for our sake," and will comfort himself with the assurance of the prophet, "Ego egenus et pauper sum, Dominus sollicitus est mei."

It is an unprofitable and foolish thing to compare the merits of one saint with those of another, and it is not wise to draw comparisons between different Orders and Congregations, and between one holy state of life and another, measuring them, as it were, one against another. Each and all have their proper excellence and perfection, with their pre-determined place in the Body of Christ.

We must reverence and esteem all the states and Orders in the Church, but we are bound to love and cherish especially our own; for in it God wishes us to be saved and sanctified.

The Church is a body, of which Jesus Christ is the head, and all the faithful are members. Each one is

gifted with different functions, though all are animated by the same spirit. The perfection of a member consists in remaining contentedly in the place which God has assigned him, and in performing well the duties of its state. If the hand wishes to be in the place of the eye and the eye wishes to be where the hand is, these two become burdensome, and disturb the good order and harmony of the body; and being through perversity without nourishment, because they are engaged in an unnatural war, they become lifeless, and are a scandal to the other members and an offence to their head. This is the comparison which is used by St. Paul.

It is the same with all men. God has assigned to each one a place and function in his Church, and to each state he has attached peculiar blessings for those who are faithful to their calling. If we are in the state and engaged in the employment or occupation which God has chosen for us, we enjoy a profound peace; we rest under the divine protection; we are nourished by God's grace; we are enriched by his blessings, and we work out our salvation with but little pain, and arrive infallibly at perfection.

"Let every man," therefore, says the Holy Ghost, "abide in the calling in which he was called;" (I. Cor. vii, 20) for "Blessed is the man that shall continue in wisdom, and that considereth her ways in his heart." (Eccles. xiv, 22, 23.) Blessed the priest who well considers his vocation, admires its wisdom and complies with all its duties. God permits the devil to try the faithfulness and constancy of his servants in their holy vocation. One of the most usual temptations which our enemy uses to shake our constancy is, to excite in us disgust and

dissatisfaction for our manner of life. Hence it is, says St. Francis de Sales, that we so often hear people complain of their state of life. It is one of the usual temptations of the enemy to make us feel discontented and to render us unhappy. Whilst we are so often admonished by the Holy Ghost to be satisfied with the condition in which we are placed, the evil spirit continually incites us to wish for a change. It is a great secret and great perfection to remain firm in the vessel of life in which God has quartered us. We fancy that by changing our ship we shall fare better: yes, if we changed ourselves. My God, I am a sworn enemy of these useless, dangerous and bad desires. God wills to speak to us amidst the thorns and the bush (Exod. iii, 2), and we will him to speak to us in "*the whistling of a gentle air.*" (III. Kings xix, 12.) We ought then to remain on board the ship in which we are, in order to cross from this life to the other; and we ought to remain there willingly and with affection, because, although we should not have been placed there by the hand of God, but by the hand of man, still, once there, God wills us to be there, and consequently we ought to be there sweetly and willingly.

"We must do our best to perfect ourselves where we are and bear manfully all the crosses, light or heavy, that we may encounter. *Believe me this is the leading principle and yet the least understood in the spiritual life.* Every one follows his own taste. Very few place their happiness in fulfilling their duty according to the pleasure of our Lord. Let every one remain firm in his vocation if he wishes to ensure tranquillity of mind, peace of heart and progress in virtue and holiness of life."

THE CATHOLIC PRIESTHOOD.

PART II.

The Private Life of the Priest.

CHAPTER I.

Obligation of the Priest to Lead a Holy Life.

The life of our dear Saviour was partly private and partly public. His private life lasted thirty years, whilst his public life lasted but three years and a half. His private life, therefore, was about ten times longer than his public life. This is a great mystery.

Look at our Lord in the little cottage at Nazareth. Is not he the same God that created the universe, that can create a thousand worlds yet brighter and more beautiful than this? And still we see him sweeping the cottage floor, drawing water from the well, helping his mother in the kitchen, helping St. Joseph at his work, planing and sawing a piece of wood, and performing the other labors of a simple mechanic.

Is not *he* that God at whose name every knee must bend in heaven, on earth and in hell? And yet he obeys his Mother and foster father in everything like a docile child. Is not *he* the uncreated Wisdom to whom the most hid-

den mysteries are revealed? Is not he the Light of Nations? Is he not the Way, the Truth and the Life? And yet he is silent. He hides himself in an obscure country-town—so obscure that Nathanael asked: "Can then anything good come out of Nazareth?" This strange conduct of our Lord seems indeed absurd to those who are guided only by the pale light of reason—who know no higher wisdom than the wisdom of the world. The natural man cannot understand how the Almighty God—the God of majesty and glory, can spend his time in such trifling occupations. This is one of those mysteries of the kingdom of God of which our Lord himself speaks: "I praise thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to the little ones." (Matt. xi, 25.)

These mysteries are hidden from the proud and self-conceited. Their addled brain cannot realize that the God of infinite might and wisdom is also a God of infinite love—that in his eyes nothing is great but what is founded in humility and love; that nothing can be greater than to fulfil his holy will with a simple and childlike heart.

The Catholic priest takes the place of Christ on earth. He is endowed with the powers of Christ. His life, then, must resemble that of Christ; it must be *contemplative*, that is, a life of prayer, and *active*, that is, a life of labor for the salvation of souls. These two kinds of life united are called the *mixed* life.

These two kinds of life united must be the life of the priest. His active or public life must have the contemplative or private life of holiness for its foundation. We shall, therefore, treat first of the *Private Life of the Priest.*

"The son honoreth his father, and the servant his master: if then I be a father, where is my honor? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts to you, O priests." (Malach. i, 6.) The prophet Malachy begins his prophesy by reproaching the priests of his time for their wicked life. Our Lord Jesus Christ did the same in the beginning as well as at the end of his public life. Indeed, the reformation of the people almost entirely depends upon the priests. The people are, generally speaking, like their pastors: *Qualis rex, talis grex.*

It is an unquestionable fact of Church history, that Luther's heresy gained so much ground, because the priests of his time were exceedingly deficient in learning and holiness of life.

"If it is the duty of the son to honor his father, and the duty of the servant to honor his master," says the Lord, "is it not still more your duty, O priests, to honor me who has done for you far more than a father can do for his son? Estote ergo perfecti, sicut pater vester, qui est in cœlis, perfectus est." (Matt. v, 48.)

The priest's life must be holy:

I. Because God has favored him so highly.

II. Because he is the representative of God.

I. The priest is especially favored by God.

Jesus Christ is the Image of his heavenly Father. In him are all divine perfections. He is the type and exemplar of the character impressed by Holy Orders upon the soul of every priest. By this character the priest is the "figura Christi"—the express image of Christ because the image of Christ's priesthood is impressed upon him, and because he is a sharer in the priesthood of Christ.

The professional badge which an officer wears is but a

material sign; but the character or mark which Christ impresses, in Holy Orders, upon the soul of every priest is something altogether spiritual; it indicates the priests' powers, duties and functions.

The sacerdotal character is impressed upon the intellect which perceives the truth of faith; and as the soul is immortal the sacerdotal character remains indelible. Hence neither the enormity of the priest's sins, nor even the eternal fire of hell can ever efface the sacerdotal character. No matter what crimes a priest may have committed, even if he has apostatized, even if he truly repents and returns to the Church, he is not re-ordained. "Tu es sacerdos in æternum." The priest is the living image of Jesus here on earth. In becoming priests, we enter into the most intimate union with the *angels*, with the *Blessed Virgin Mary*, with *Jesus*, and with the most *Holy Trinity*.

The priest and the blessed spirits have the same name. "Angelo Ecclesiæ Ephesi scribe. (Aphocal. ii, 1.) They have the same office. "Nonne omnes sunt administratorii spiritus, in ministerium missi propter eos, qui hæreditatem capient salutis." (Heb. ii, 16.)

They have the same occupation. "Cum quibus et nostras voces ut admitti jubeas deprecamur." (Præf. Missæ.) In becoming priests we enter also into the most intimate union with the *Blessed Virgin:* "De qua natus est Jesus." (Matt. i, 16.) This same Jesus is born anew every day in our hands. We enter into the closest relations with *Jesus*, who has given us his own divine power: "Sicut misit me Pater, et ego mitto vos." (John xx, 21.) We enter into the most intimate union with *God* himself: "Ego dixi, dii estis, filii Altissimi omnes." (Jere. xli, 23.)

Our vocation to the priesthood is not the fruit of our merits and good works. It is an act of God's infinite mercy and love. We priests can say in truth: "Vocavit nos vocatione sua sancta, non secundum opera nostra, sed secundum propositum suum et gratiam." (II. Tim. i, 4.) Jesus himself says: "Non vos me elegistis, sed ego elegi vos." "Ego elegi vos de mundo." (John xv, 19.) "Vocavit ad se quos voluit ipse." (M. iii, 13.) In raising us to so high a dignity, God has shown us special love which requires that we should love him in turn. As God has raised us above all men—Suscitans a terra inopem, et de stercore erigens pauperem, ut collocet eum cum principibus, cum principibus populi sui—since he has raised us to a dignity higher than even that of the angels, it naturally follows that he also requires of us a higher degree of virtue; he requires that we should live as angels here on earth. The priest should therefore not only keep the commandments, as all men must do, he should also, as far as possible, practise even the evangelical counsels; otherwise the words of Holy Writ will be fulfilled in his regard: "Homo, cum in honore esset, non intellexit." (Ps. xlviii, 13.)

II. The priest must be holy because he is the Representative of Jesus Christ here on earth both as Mediator and as Pastor.

"For Christ we are ambassadors, God, as it were, exhorting by us," says St. Paul, (II. Cor. v, 20.) We are invested with Christ's power. In his name we consecrate, baptize, forgive sins, preach, etc. Now the priest's life should be conformable to the divine actions he performs. "Sancta sanctis." A wise monarch will not select as his plenipotentiary a man of infamous char-

acter. And shall not our Lord be equally choice in the selection of his ambassadors and representatives?

How holy should be the hands of the priest, that daily touch the sacred Body of Jesus Christ, those hands which have been anointed and consecrated, "Ut quæcunque benedixerint benedicantur, quæcunque consecraverint, consecrantur," (Pontificale.) How holy ought not these lips to be that havebeen purified and consecrated for the Gospel, "Os tuum consecrasti evangelio," (St. Bernardus) these lips which are daily sanctified anew by the words of consecration and by receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ? O! quanto mundiores esse oportet, qui in manibus et corpore portant Christum!" (Pet. de Blois, epist. 123.)

"Quo solari radio non splendidiorem oportet esse manum carnem hanc dividentem, os quod igne spiritali repletur, linguam quæ tremendo nimis sanguine rubescit!" (St. Chrysost. ad popul. Antich. Hom. 60.)

The priest of the Old Law sacrificed only lambs and sheep, but the priests of the New Law sacrifice and receive the Lamb of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. How more holy, therefore, should be their lives, since they are so much more highly favored!

"He that shall do and teach," says our Lord, "he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. v, 19.) Jesus Christ, the eternal Wisdom of the Father, was infinitely wise from the very first moment of his life; yet he began to teach only when he was thirty years old, only after having prepared himself by his retreat in the desert, a forty days' fast and many other austerities. Assuredly he needed no preparation, as he is Holiness itself; but he wished to teach us by his example that we

should prepare ourselves for the sacred ministry by leading a holy life.

When Jesus Christ sent his Apostles to preach the Gospel to all nations, he could have given them at once all the graces they needed; but instead of doing so, he commanded them to stay in Jerusalem until they had received the Holy Ghost. By this he gave us to understand that we should be deeply grounded in humility, chastity, mortification and all other virtues in order to be his worthy representatives. Actors on the stage take so much pains to represent properly the various characters which they sustain. And we the representatives of Jesus Christ, what pains do we take to represent him worthily? The very looks of the priest, the manner in which he says Mass, his way of preaching, in fact, his every tone and word and gesture should convince the people that Jesus Christ lives in him, and speaks and acts through him.

A priest may give a beautiful explanation of humility; he may show very forcibly the vanity of the world, but, if he is not really humble himself, if he does not really despise everything that can separate him from God, he is far from representing Jesus Christ; he is but a sorry actor that plays his part for a little paltry gain.

It is the sanctity of the priest that makes him loved and venerated by the people; it is the holiness of his life that makes the people look upon him as an angel rather than a man. If the priest shares in the powers of Jesus Christ, should he not also partake of Christ's holiness by leading a holy life?

St. Paul says of ordinary Christians: "Mortui estis et vita vestra est abscondita cum Christo in Deo" (Col.

xxxiii,) and "Elegit nos in Christo ante mundi constitutionem, ut essemus sancti et immaculati in conspectu ejus." (Eph. i, 4.) How much more should this be true of the priest? "Tales esse convenit graves, prudentes, pios, irreprehensibiles, immaculatos, ut quisquis viderit eos, stupeat, et admiretur et dicat: Hi homines sunt Dei, quorum talis est conversatio." (St. Augustine.) "Tantum inter sacerdotem et quemlibet probum interesse debet, quantum inter cœlum et terram discriminis est." (St. Isidor, Pelus. Lib. 2, Epist. 205.)

The priest should surpass the faithful in every virtue as much as he surpasses them in dignity; as much as the life of the shepherd surpasses in value the life of the sheep; as much as the light of the sun surpasses that of the moon or the planets. This is the language of St. Gregory the Great, St. Chrysostom, and St. Lawrence Justinian.

St. Thomas declares that a priest, especially one who has the care of souls, should be holier than a mere religious. (2. 2. 9. 184.) Suarez says that priests, especially pastors and curates, are like bishops "in statu perfectionis exercendæ," while religious are only in statu perfectionis acquirendæ." (De Relig. to. 3. l. 1. c. 17.)

If the Church requires positive holiness of life in him who is about to be ordained, how much more does she require holiness in him after Ordination?

The Church declares as plainly as words can express it that the "ministri ecclesiæ fide et opere debent esse perfecti. "Eluceat in eis totius forma Justitiæ." (Pontif.)

As priests we are separated from the world—we have become clerics, clergy—that is, our exclusive portion is

God. In the Old Law God said to Moses: "Statues Levitas in conspectu Aaron et consecrabis oblatos Domino, ac separabis de medio filiorum Israël, ut sint mei." (Num. viii, 13.) God said of his priests in the Old Law: "Eritis mihi sancti, quia sanctus sum ego Dominus, et separavi vos a cœteris populis, ut essetis mei." (Lev. xx, 26.) The priest of the Old Law was led to the temple, where he was invested with special garments to remind him that, as he differed from others in dress, so he should differ also in his way of life. On the head-dress were the words, "Sanctum Domino." "Incensum enim Domino, et panes Dei offerunt, et ideo sancti erunt."

The priesthood of the Old Law was but a feeble image of the priesthood of the New Law. Before conferring Holy Orders the bishop prays: Ut hos electos benedicere, sanctificare et consecrare digneris." By ordination we become, as St. Cyril of Alexandria says, "Sacrum electumque genus divinis ministeriis mancipatum." Think then, O priest of the Lord, what reverence we should have for ourselves. We should employ all the members of our body, all the faculties of our soul only for God. How carefully ought we to watch over our eyes, our tongue, and all our senses!

The priest holds Christ's place as *mediator.*

The duty of the priest is to intercede with God for the people; to assist the people by his prayers and his merits. He must intercede with God for his own salvation, and for that of the whole world. "Pro nostra et totius mundi salute." He has to obtain for the people every blessing, temporal and spiritual. The priest must pray for the pastors who govern the Church, that they may always follow the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, he

must pray for the faithful, especially for those confided to his care, that they may persevere in the grace of God; he must pray for sinners, that they may give up sin and return to the friendship of God. The priest must act, says St. Chrysostom, "Quasi mundus illi universus concreditus sit, atque omnium ipse pater sit, sic ad Deum accedit." (De Sacerd,6. C. 4.)

It is the special duty of the priest to reconcile the sinner with God. "Orabit pro eo sacerdos, et pro peccato ejus coram Domino, dimitteturque peccatum." (Lev. xix, 22.) "Inter vestibulum et altare plorabunt sacerdotes, ministri Domini et dicent: Parce, Domine, parce populo tuo, et nedes hæreditatem tuam in opprobrium." (Joel ii, 17.) A father who loves his son tenderly, does not wish to chastise him every time he deserves punishment. He is glad if some friend intercedes for his son and thus spares him the pain of punishing him. God acts in the same manner. He is a father who loves all men most tenderly. When men deserve punishment for their sins, God looks for some friend, who, by his intercession, will stay his arm and prevent the well-merited punishment. "I sought among them," he says by his prophet, "a man that might set up a hedge between us and would take part with earth against me, that I might not destroy it, and I found none." And I poured out my indignation upon them." (Ezech. xxii, 30.)

"Go about through the streets of Jerusalem," he says through his prophet Jeremiah, "and see and consider, and seek in the broad places thereof if you can find a man that executeth judgment, and seeketh faith: and I will be merciful unto it." (vi, 1.) The Lord declares himself ready to forgive and spare this sinful city if only one just man intercedes for it.

He who intercedes for a criminal must be the friend of him who has power to pardon the criminal. Now the priest is the mediator between God and the sinner; he must, therefore, be a friend of God, he must lead a holy life. Can he say in truth: "Lavabo inter innocentes manus meas. Ego autem in innocentia mea ingressus sum. Pes meus stetit in directo"? (Ps. xxv.)

On the dread day of doom when Jesus Christ shall come to judge us, when the people shall accuse us of having failed in our sacred duty of mediator, when so many sinners shall accuse us of being the cause of their damnation, of being wanting in that sanctity which might have saved them—what excuse will we give?

"O felices sacerdotes! Si sacerdotaliter vixeritis!" says St. Lawrence Justinian. It is only our virtues that make us powerful intercessors with God. "Si non places, non placas," says the same saint.

The priest is, moreover, pastor; he has the care of souls; he must feed the people with the word of God; he must purify and sanctify them by the sacraments; he must lead and encourage them by his example. He must instruct the people, encourage them to walk in the path of virtue; he must reprove and correct them when they go astray. But what will the priest's words avail if he himself does not practise what he preaches? Such a priest resembles the sign-post on the way-side. It shows the way to others, but remains itself fixed in the mire.

What profit will the people derive from the sermons of such a priest? Our words strike only the ear; they do not change the heart unless God's grace accompanies them. "Ego plantavi," says St. Paul, "Appollo rigavit, Deus autem incrementum dedit." If the heart of the

priest is not inflamed with divine charity, his words fall cold and fruitless on the hearts of his hearers. "Non in persuasibilibus humanæ sapientiæ verbis, sed in ostensione spiritus et virtutis." (I. Cor. ii, 4.) "Qui non ardet,non incendit," says St. Gregory.

The priest that must say to the people, "do as I tell you, but do not follow my example," is with all his talent and eloquence but a sounding brass and tinkling cymbal." He is like a huge drum; he makes much noise, but remains always empty.

How can the careless priest reprove those who are living in sin when his own life is sinful; how can he preach penance when his own life is carnal? How can he tell the people that they must be pure, sober, free from avarice, and so on, when he himself is guilty? How can he tell the people that they must pray often, that they must make a good thanksgiving after Communion, that they must often visit the blessed Sacrament, when he himself does none of these things? Cannot the people say to him in truth: "Medice, cura teipsum. (Luke iv, 23.) In quo judicas alterum, te ipsum condemnas, eadem agis quæ judicas." (Rom. ii, 1.) "In the Christian priest," says St. Jerome, "mouth, heart and hand must work together. It is easy to preach on fasting with a well-lined stomach. It is sad enough to see the people afraid of their pastor and lacking confidence in him; but it is far worse, if the people despise their pastor, if they have no respect for him.

The bad conduct of one unworthy priest casts an indelible stain upon the entire priesthood. How often have we to suffer for the crimes of priests whom we perhaps have never seen!

The example of the martyrs converted more heathens than all the learned apologies of even the most saintly doctors. Even at the present day, one virtuous priest does more good, saves more souls than a dozen learned men whose lives are far from edifying.

"Qui in litteris proficit et in moribus deficit," says St. Augustine, "plus deficit quam proficit."

The priest, especially in this country, stands indeed on the candlestick. A thousand eyes are watching him, and they are not always the eyes of friends and admirers. The priest, therefore, must live "non tantum *caste*, sed et *caute*." A lady once said of a certain clergyman who was somewhat of a dandy: "O, he is a very pleasant gentleman, but I would not like to go to confession to him."

Priests are called by our Lord, "the salt of the earth." Through them the world is to be seasoned, with the spirit of humility, meakness, patience, charity, devotion, and contempt of the world. How can the careless priest infuse into others virtues which he himself does not possess? To infuse these virtues into others, something more is required than the bare knowledge of the names of the virtues. As pastor the priest must also administer the *sacraments*. Now, "Qui sancti non sunt, sancta tractare non debent."

Take, for instance, the sacrament of penance. O how pure must be the heart of the priest in the confessional! How prudent, how learned, how patient must he be. How easily he can ruin souls? How much harm he can do, if he is either too lax or too rigorous!

How many an unworthy priest resembles the baptismal water that sanctifies others, but is itself cast away!

what must be the feeling of the unworthy priest when he says to a sinner, "Ego te absolvo," while his own conscience cries out to him: Et ego te condemno. How sad to see the unworthy priest giving life to others, while he gives death to himself!

The priest is bound especially to give *good example* to his flock. "Spectaculum facti suums mundo et angelis," says the Apostle (I. Cor. iv, 9.) God has elevated him that the light of his good works should shine before the eyes of all. "Exemplum dedi vobis," says Jesus to his Apostles, "ut quemadmodum ego feci vobis, ita et vos faciatis." By imitating the example of our Lord, we show to a sinful world that his example is not too high or too hard to follow; we encourage others to follow in his divine footsteps. For this our Lord prayed especially: "Pater, sanctifica eos in veritate." (John xvii, 17.)

The people, too, know full well that the priest must imitate the life of Jesus here on earth. A priest who no longer imitates his divine model is despised by all. And what is the saddest of all, by his wicked life, such an unworthy priest dishonors God. "Qualis est Deus eorum, qui talia agunt," says the infidel. "Numquid sustineret talia agentes, nisi consentiret eorum operibus?"

"In omnibus teipsum præbe exemplum," writes St. Paul to Titus (ii, 7) "in integritate, in gravitate, verbum sanum, irreprehensibile, ut is, qui ex adverso est, vereatur, nihil habens malum dicere de nobis." (c. ii, 7.) "Attende tibi et doctrinæ," he says to Timothy. Mark well! he puts, "tibi," first. The most eloquent sermon is good example.

"Nihil est quod alios magis ad pietatem et Dei cultum assidue instruat," says the Council of Trent, "quam

eorum vita et exemplum, qui se divinis ministeriis dedicarunt. Quum enim a rebus sæculi in altiorem sublati locum conspiciuntur, in eos tanquam in speculum reliqui oculos conjiciunt ex iisque sumunt quæ imitentur. Quapropter sic decet omnino clericos, in sortem Domini vocatos, vitam moresque suos omnes componere, ut habitu, gestu, incessu, sermone, aliisque omnibus rebus, nil nisi grave, moderatum ac religione plenum præ se ferant; levia etiam delicta, quæ in ipsis maxima essent, effugiant, ut eorum actiones cunctis afferant venerationem." (Sess. xxii, 1, de Reform.) "Vita clericorum liber laicorum," says St. Jerome. The Apostles converted the world, because they could say in truth: "Imitatores mei estote, sicut et ego Christi." (I. Cor. xi, 1.) The priest has to associate with all classes. How can he be continually on his guard so as never to give bad example unless he has complete control of his passions and is intimately united with God?

And if the priest, especially the pastor, is not what he ought to be in word and in deed; if he does not do himself what he requires of others; if he is not, in the words of the Apostle, "benignus, sobrius, justus, sanctus, continens, amplectens eum, qui secundum doctrinam est, fidelem sermonem, ut potens sit exhortare in doctrina sancta, et eos qui contradicunt arguere;" (Tit. i, 8.) if he deserves the reproach of the Apostle, "Qui alium doces teipsum non doces," (Rom. ii, 21) what will be the consequence? "Qui sibi nequam est," says Holy Writ, "cui alio bonus erit?" (Ecclus xiv, 5.)

The consequence will be that such an unworthy priest and his flock will both go to ruin. Cæcus si cæcum ducatum præstet, ambo in foveam cadunt," says Jesus himself. (Matt. xv, 4.)

The good people have no confidence in him. "He in whom I put my confidence must surpass me," says St. Ambrose. (De off. ii, 12.) They do not care to go to confession to such a priest. How can he lead them on in the spiritual life? Such a priest does not care to go into the confessional. The people have to wait so long for him, then he hurries them through; he does not question or help them. The people do not care to assist even at his Mass. He does not edify them even at the altar. He celebrates so hastily, scolds even at the altar, even when giving holy Communion, with the Lamb of God in his hands! He makes no preparation for the awful sacrifice, little or no thanksgiving after. The people notice everything. They are shocked and scandalized.

And the bad, careless Catholics—why, they lose all respect for such a priest. Finally, they lose the faith and give up the practice of religion altogether. "Why," they say, "the priest does not believe himself what he preaches; if he did he would not act as he does."

A careless priest only encourages the sinner in his wicked life. "The priest," says Massillon, "will either edify or give scandal. If he does not give life, he will cause death. If he is not a model of virtue, he becomes a stumbling block. If he does not preach piety by his actions, he encourages and promotes vice. "In divina omni re," says St. Thomas, "non est audendum aliis ducem fieri, nisi secundum omnem habitum suum sit Dei formosissimus et Deo simillimus." (Suppl. 9, 36, a, 1.)

The people who have been led astray by the bad example of such a priest, may return to the practice of their religion. God is merciful to them and often helps them in a wonderful manner; but the unworthy priest usually

lives and dies in his sins. The scandals which he has given hang around his neck like a heavy mill-stone and sinks him every day deeper in the ocean of iniquity. "Si sal infatuatum fuerit, in quo salietur? Ad nihil valet ultra nisi ut mittatur foras, et conculcetur ab hominibus." (Matt. v, 15.) "Audite hoc sacerdotes," says the prophet, "quia vobis judicium est." (Osee v, 1.)

If the priest is not holy, every sacred function he performs falls like a solemn anathema on his guilty head. If he does not perform the sacred functions worthily he defiles himself at the very sources of sanctity; he shuts up heaven against himself by the very means by which he opens the gates of heaven to others.

"The priests that come to the Lord, let them be sanctified, lest he strike them." (Exod. xix, 22.)

By our vocation to the priesthood we are placed in a superior order; it follows that we are bound to the practice of superior virtue. We have peculiar graces and special means of perfection. Our justice should therefore surpass that of the laity. The good priest, says St. Bernard, always hungers and thirsts after justice; he knows no other riches than the virtues of his state of life, no other solicitude than that of increasing in perfection, no other pleasure than that of pleasing God, no other glory than that of adorning his soul with every virtue.

In conclusion a few maxims of St. Alphonsus:

1. I am a priest; my dignity surpasses even that of the angels; I must therefore possess the greatest possible purity; I must, as far as possible, lead the life of an angel here on earth.

2. God obeys my voice; I must therefore obey the

voice of God, the inspirations of his grace, the voice of my lawful superiors.

3. The Church honors me; I must therefore honor the Church; I must honor the Church by a virtuous life, by my learning, by my zeal for souls, etc.

4. I offer to the heavenly Father his divine Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. I must therefore earnestly strive to acquire the virtues of Jesus, since I have to unite myself so intimately with the God of all holiness.

5. By my office I am the mediator between God and men; I must therefore labor to make myself pleasing to God and to remain always in his grace.

6. The people around me are apt to imitate my example; I must therefore seek to edify them on every occasion.

7. My vocation is to free sinners from the chains of sin and hell. I must therefore fit myself for this great work by prayer and by good works.

8. To conquer my enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, I need light and strength. I must therefore correspond faithfully with the graces God gives me.

9. I must strive earnestly to acquire knowledge; for my vocation is to defend the faith and to unmask error.

10. I must hate and abhor human respect and dangerous friendships; they bring dishonor on the priesthood.

11. I must curse and abhor all pride, ambition and self-seeking. O, how many a priest has been ruined by these passions?

12. I must be kind, yet ever mindful of my priestly dignity. I must be prudent and reserved, especially in presence of those of the other sex; but never proud, rude or harsh.

13. If I desire to please God, I must be recollected and zealous; I must strive to acquire solid virtue. I must be always usefully occupied.

14. I must always have in view the glory of God and the salvation of my soul and I must labor for the salvation of my neighbor. For this I must be willing to make every sacrifice, even the sacrifice of my life. (Life of St. Alphonsus, Rispoli, p. 35.)

CHAPTER II.

The Value of Time and the Great Means to Spend it Profitably.

I. The value of time. "Everything has its time, and in due time, everything under heaven passes away." (Ecc. iii, 1.)

"Nothing is more common than time," says St. Austin. "We understand quite well what time means when we speak of it; we understand what it means when others speak of it; and yet, if you ask me: 'What is time?' I must answer: I do not know; I cannot explain to you what it is." Time seems to be something opposed to eternity; for, we generally use the words *temporal* and *eternal* as opposite terms; and yet time is but a few drops flowing out of the boundless ocean of eternity. The only part of time that we can grasp is the present moment.

Now what is the present moment? It is the moment in which I now think, or speak, or write, or read, or do something else. But see! even as I think, or speak, it is passed; and the past belongs no more to me than the future. The past I can never recall; the future I may never see. One moment follows another. These moments by degrees form days and weeks and years; and years and centuries pass and leave no trace behind!

Balaam, speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, which he foresees before either Rome or Jerusalem has been built, exclaims in astonishment, "Ah!

who shall live when these things shall come to pass?" And yet these days have come, and they passed away over eighteen hundred years ago. And we are living now. Where shall we be, who shall be living a hundred years hence?

We live in the present moment and torment ourselves with the cares and trials that surround us *now* or that we see approaching. As soon, however, as these trials are past, we begin to forget them, and soon they become like things seen in a dream, or like the objects we behold in the dim distance. Can any one of us remember exactly all that occupied his thoughts and filled him with so much care and anxiety during the past year? Probably not. The events of the past year may have caused us great joy or great sorrow at the time; but, by degrees, this joy or sorrow wears away. New cares and new joys fill our hearts, and the cares and joys of the past are forgotten.

Our memory is weak. We easily forget the past; but God *never* forgets. Past, present and future are alike before him. In an instant he beholds all, in the unchanging unity of eternity. He sees how each one has employed every moment of his time. All is written in the book of life or inscribed in the book of death. Countless generations succeed one another, like the murmuring waves on the sea beach; but not one of their good or evil deeds is hidden or forgotten. God remembers them all. Every action, every word, every thought, every emotion of the heart, even though quicker than light—all, all are remembered, all will be seen in eternity.

Now it is precisely this relation of time to eternity that makes time so unspeakably precious. A great saint

goes even so far as to say that time is of as much value as heaven, as God himself. Whether we shall possess God in heaven or not, depends on the use we make of our time. We can lose God every moment of our life, and we can gain God too every moment. At each moment we can advance in perfection; for, at each moment new graces are given us. If we use the present moment well, we shall have an everlasting gain; if we neglect the present moment, we shall suffer an everlasting loss. We may indeed receive other graces, and use them well; we may atone for our faults by true penance; but lost time we can never—never recall. That which is done we cannot make undone.

Time is like a certain measure of seed which God has given us to sow and cultivate and thus bring forth fruit into life everlasting. "Be patient, my brethren," says St. James, "until our Lord comes. See the husbandman expects the precious fruit of his toil, and waits patiently for the late and early rain. In like manner be ye patient and take courage, for the coming of the Lord is nigh." (v. 7.) The farmer takes so much pains with the tillage of his field, and yet he is not certain that he shall reap the fruit of his toil. Perhaps a hail storm or a flood or drought, or failure of the crop will blast his hopes, and render all his labors fruitless.

We, on the contrary, if we persevere to the end, can be infallibly certain that every moment of time that is well spent, will bring fruit a hundredfold throughout all eternity. If a farmer has the misfortune to lose his crop, he is not altogether ruined; he has perhaps other means of support; he hopes, too, that he will have better luck next year; but if we make a bad use of our time, we can

never hope to repair the loss; we shall reap only sorrow and malediction. "Do not deceive yourselves," says St. Paul, "God is not to be mocked. Whatever a man sows, that he shall reap. He that sows the seed of his corrupt passions, shall reap the fruit of his passions, while he that sows in the spirit of faith, shall reap eternal life. Let us not then grow weary in well doing, for in due time we shall receive our reward." (Gal. vi, 7.)

How sad it is to see so many who foolishly waste their precious time; nay, even spend that time in sin, which was given them for their salvation! They find time for their business, time for rest, time for amusement, aye, even time for sinning, but for the sanctification of their immortal soul, for God and heaven, they can find no time. And whenever they are forced through sickness, or otherwise, to think of their soul, they look upon such time as lost. They are only too glad when the tedious time, as they call it, is over.

The priest who loses his time without scruple exposes himself to all kinds of temptations, and his life is but a continual disorder. Idleness teaches all vices. "Multam malitiam docuit otiositas." (Eccl. xxxiii, 29.) St. Bernard calls it "mater nugarum, noverca virtutum, omnium tentationum et cogitationum malarum sentina, summa mentis malitia." A wise occupation is a buckler to the heart. "Clypeus cordis labor," says St. Jerome. The devil has to make but little effort to throw into the most shameful disorders, one who is already enervated by idleness, and whose soul is open to all bad impressions. "Luxuria cito decipit hominem otiosum, hominem vagantem. Gravius urit quem otiosum invenit," says St. Bernard. (De modo bene vivendi, serm. 51.) "David,

Solomon, Samson in occupationibus sancti, in otio perierunt," says St. Augustine. (Ad Tratres in Eremo, serm. 17.)

The stream is pure whilst it runs rapidly on the side of a hill; but no sooner have its limpid waters come into a plain where they are more or less stagnant, than they become marshy. Remove them and you will find "reptilia quorum non est numerus." Such is the heart of an indolent man. It is still more frightful when we see the consequences of this indolence, in a priest, in relation to his neighbor.

Suppose the sun should refuse its light and its heat; or the atmosphere should no longer be agitated by the wind, which purifies and renews the air. The miseries that such a fatal repose would bring upon the physical world, are the image of those which this disorder in the clergy causes in the moral world. The inaction of the sun would plunge men into utter darkness, and strike the earth with sterility. In the second hypothesis, the air destined to sustain life would become a principle of death. Such also are the effects of indolence in the sacerdotal life.

The priest who loses his time can neither enlighten souls by solid instruction, nor inflame them with the fire of his zeal. He has no zeal; if he had, would he coldly and indifferently suffer his brethren to perish, for whom Jesus Christ has shed his precious Blood? Would he consume in frivolous conversations, in vain amusements, in dissipated courses, moments which he could and should spend to advantage to himself or his fellow-men?

Oh! how much to be pitied is the flock, confided to a pastor who despises the price of time. His parish is like

the field of the sluggard. "Per agrum hominis pigri transivi. . . et ecce totum repleverant urticæ et operuerunt superficiem ejus spinæ." Irreligion and corruption of manners show themselves without a veil; there is no protection for souls against the invasion of all vices. "Maceria lapidum destructa erat." (Prov. xxiv, 30, 31.) And who can tell the scandals arising from this slothful life, scandals that carry contagion and death everywhere when they are given by those in whom the people seek and ought always to find models of virtue?

"The duties of a pastor," says Father Avila, "are so many and so important that a priest who performs but one-third of them is looked upon by all as a saint, and yet if he should not do more, he would not escape hell."

O God! what a torment will be for them in hell to think of the bad use they have made of their time, and to know that time shall be given them no more! "Tempus non erit amplius." (Apoc.) Even the saints in heaven, were they capable of envy or of regret, would envy us for the time that is yet given us. They would regret that they did not make a better use of their time while on earth and thus attain a higher degree of glory.

The saints were so avaricious of their time that they could not suffer a single moment to be lost. Some even went so far as to make a vow, like St. Alphonsus, that they would never willingly lose a moment of time.

One day St. Frances de Chantal was asked why she did not give herself a moment of recreation and why she was so avaricious of her time. "It is not mine," she answered; "I have consecrated it all to the Lord, and I cannot lose a single moment without committing an injustice towards him to whom it belongs."

This language should certainly be that of every priest. St. Francis de Sales said : "When I think of the employment I have made of God's time, I fear he will not give me his happy eternity, since he gives it to those only who make a good use of time." What a prodigy of humility! Where find a better life than that of St. Francis de Sales? Is it not for me to tremble when I consider how I have employed God's time?

We blame people of the world for making a bad use of their time; but let us take care that we do not act just as foolishly. "I declare to you," says our Lord in the Gospel, "for every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account on the day of judgment." (Matt. xii, 31.) Now, if we have to give an account of every idle word, we must also necessarily give an account of every moment of our time; we especially who have consecrated ourselves to God, and sworn to employ in his service all our time and all our faculties. It is precisely for this very purpose that God has called us to the priesthood.

All that time, then, is lost which we do not employ according to the will of God.

II. *The great means to spend time profitably.*

Now idleness or loss of time has its beginning in the want of order. He who works with method, labors and fulfils all his duties with great ease, faithfulness and merit; but he who begins to work without order and rule, walks blindfold, and ere long falls so low that he almost despairs of ever being able to rise again.

In order, then, to spend his time for the glory of God, for the sanctification of his own soul, and the salvation of his neighbor, every good priest draws up for himself a good rule of life and strives to live up to it.

"Order leads us to God," says St. Augustine, "and whatever comes from God, is always well ordered." "If you live according to rule," says St. Gregory, "you live according to God."

The habit of order is a continual practice of self-denial; it strengthens the will in time to overcome temptation; it makes the day pass quicker, and more agreeably; it leaves no time for melancholy; it makes you do much more good, and keeps the mind healthier; it makes you resemble a religious, of whom St. Bernard says: "He lives more purely, falls more rarely, rises more promptly, walks more cautiously, receives graces more abundantly, reposes more securely, dies more hopefully, is cleansed more speedily and is rewarded more plentifully."

In drawing up a rule of conduct, do not go so far as to fix a particular occupation for each hour of the day. Such a rule might become too burdensome. Your rule of life must be one that you can follow with cheerfulness —a rule about your rising, meditation, Mass, visit, prayers, and other duties.

"A rule of life," says Bishop Herbert of Salford, "is so necessary for a secular priest that, if he thinks because he is not a monk he may live with his mind all abroad, by impulse and without rule, or if he knows that he has not sufficient self-mastery to lead a life of rule by himself, let him be well assured that he has no vocation to be a secular priest, because his salvation will ever be in fearful jeopardy, and his fall may be heard of any day." (Preface to the life of St. John Baptist de Rossi.) Do not depart from your rule out of caprice or cowardice, but only out of necessity, or for the sake of

charity, or for some real call of civility. Rise early, as far as possible at the hour fixed. For this purpose keep an alarm-clock. Obey it punctually. Seven hours of sleep are sufficient for a healthy man. To sleep longer is laziness, which oppresses the mind and renders it unfit for mental labor. God loves faithfulness in rising. He expects you to offer to him in the morning the first beat of your heart. The devil also is looking for it.

"The grace of perseverance in your vocation," says St. Vincent de Paul "depends on prayer, and the grace of prayer depends on punctuality in rising in the morning."

To be able to rise in due time, go early to bed. To sit up to a late hour at night is very injurious to health, especially to the eye-sight. "It is hard," says St. Francis de Sales, "to make people believe how dangerous this practice is, how weakening to the brain. Its effects are not felt in youth; but they are the more keenly felt later on in life, and many have thus made themselves utterly useless."

"Keep order in all things," says St. Bernard, "and order will keep you."

The statutes of the diocese of Liege require every priest to perform the following exercises of devotion:

1. "Daily make at least a quarter of an hour's meditation.

2. "Daily visit the Blessed Sacrament, at least for a quarter of an hour."

If you have a friend whom you dearly love, you will visit him as often as possible; you will remain with him as long as you can. You will do this the more readily if you know that he is pleased with your visit; that he

loves to see you near him. Now the dearest and best friend we have in the world is our Saviour Jesus Christ. We should, therefore, visit him often and remain as long as possible near him. Surely common decency, even natural gratitude, should compel the priest to visit our Lord as often as possible in the sacrament of his love. The priest calls him down every day from his throne in heaven; the priest receives every day his sacred flesh and blood. Our Lord remains day and night in the tabernacle on his account. He has so many things to tell you.

3. "Daily perform some special devotion to the Blessed Virgin, as, for instance, the Rosary."

4. "Make a spiritual reading every day either in the lives of the saints or in the work of some good ascetic author."

"Whosoever wishes to walk with God," says St. Isidore, "must often pray and read. When we pray, we speak to God; but when we read, God speaks to us. All our progress in virtue depends on meditation and spiritual reading." "Spiritual reading," says St. Francis de Sales, is to prayer what oil is to a lamp. Alas! how many lamps are extinguished, morning after morning, for want of oil!"

5. "Make your particular examination of conscience every day."

"Keenly watch over thine advancement in perfection," says St. Bernard. "Every day examine thy course of life; mark well thy spiritual progress or want of it; mark well how near or far from God you are, not in distance of place, but in affection, desire and love. Endeavor to know yourself thoroughly; you are much better and far more praiseworthy for knowing yourself well than for knowing the course of the stars."

6. "Go to confession at least every fortnight."

Choose for your confessor a priest who conscientiously discharges his sublime and awful duty—a priest who is enlightened and edifying, meek and firm.

If there is a priest more pious than learned, and another more learned than pious, choose, if possible, the latter for confessor. If, for certain reasons, you run from one confessor to another, you have reason to tremble. "It is very useful for a priest," says St. Charles Borromeo, "to have one fixed confessor and not to give him up without some urgent necessity. Such a change is usually just as injurious to the soul as the change of physician is to the body."

Do not hear each other's confession without necessity; thus your confessor's liberty and your own confidence in him will be preserved whole and entire. Be sincere in disclosing to him the state of your conscience. He who is his own theologian easily falls into illusion.

7. "Make your spiritual exercises (retreat) at least every two or three years."

There have always been, even from the beginning of the world, certain times when God bestows extraordinary graces; as, for instance, the days of the patriarchs and prophets, the days of our divine Saviour and the Apostles. It is true that God is always near us, always willing and able to help us; but it is also true that there are times when God becomes more intimately united to our souls and bestows on us more signal marks of his love. God is perfectly free; he is the master of his gifts. He gives *when* he wills and *in what measure* he wills. Now such a time of extraordinary grace is precisely the time of retreat. It is indeed "an acceptable time, a time of salvation."

In the second place a retreat is a time of silence and retirement, as far as possible, from the cares and tumult of the world, in order to consider well your duties to God, to yourself and to your neighbor; a time to consider the great truths of religion, and especially your last end.

In the hurry of worldly occupations, in laboring continually for others, we are apt to forget the end for which we came into the world and the destiny that awaits us after death. Now the retreat is a most powerful means to remedy this evil. During the retreat the awful truths of our holy faith are brought home to our mind and heart.

The first Christian retreat we read of is that of the Apostles and the holy women; a retreat commanded by our Lord himself. Before ascending to heaven, our Saviour commanded them to retire from the noise and bustle of the city, and to await in prayer and solitude the coming of the Holy Ghost. "For nine days the Apostles remained in the supper-room. They persevered in united prayer with Mary, the Mother of Jesus. On the tenth day, the Holy Ghost came down upon them and they were filled with the Holy Ghost." A similar grace is bestowed upon those who make a good retreat.

CHAPTER III.

Necessity of Prayer for a Pastor.

"Nos vero orationi instantes erimus." (Act. vi, 4.)

Prayer is the breathing of the soul. Just as breathing is necessary for the bodily life, so is prayer necessary for the life of the soul. "He that prays will be saved; he that does not pray will be lost," says St. Alphonsus.

Again he says with Suarez and St. Thomas: "Pro, babilius est orationem nobis esse necessariam necessitate medii." (L. iii, tr. 1. Introd.)

Our Lord himself, in the plainest language, commands us to pray: "Orate, ne intretis in tentationem." (Luke xxii, 40.) "Petite et dabitur vobis." (Matt. vii, 7.) "Petite et accipietis." (John xvi, 24.) "Oportet semper orare et non deficere." (Luke xviii, 1.) He does not say merely: It is good and useful to pray; but he says: "Oportet orare;" "Petite," "Orate." He speaks in the imperative mood.

Now if prayer is necessary for all men, it is especially necessary for the priest, the man of God, the mediator between God and man.

1. The priest's *relations to God* require that he should be a man of prayer.

Prayer is an essential part of divine worship. Man is bound to worship God, to pray to God as his Creator. Now the higher one is in dignity, the nearer one approaches God, the greater is one's obligation to worship God, to pray to God. But who is nearer to God than the priest?

He is the angel, the ambassador, the representative of the Most High.

God has created us and given us whatever we possess. All our talents, our gifts of nature and grace belong to him. We are, therefore, bound to show our gratitude to God; to praise and thank him for so many benefits; to acknowledge our weakness and beg his continual protection. This we are bound to do, especially since the day we uttered the irrevocable words: "Dominus pars hereditatis meæ."

2. *The welfare of the faithful requires that the priest should be a man of prayer.*

He should imitate the example of his divine Master and pray continually for those confided to his care. "Pater sancte, serva eos quos dedisti mihi. Sanctifica eos in veritate." (John xvii.) He should say with the faithful Samuel: "Absit a me hoc peccatum in Doinum, ut cessem orare pro vobis." (i. Reg. xii, 23.)

The Church calls each day of the priest's life a "feria" or holiday; not that he should waste it in idleness, but that he should employ it for God and the spiritual welfare of the people. "Omnis enim Pontifex ex hominibus assumptus, pro hominibus constituitur in iis quæ sunt ad Deum, ut offerat dona et sacrificia pro peccatis." (Heb. v, 1.) The priest has to pray for those who govern the Church—the Pope and the bishops, that God may give them light and strength and every other virtue.

He has to pray for his friends and enemies, for the perseverance of the just and the conversion of sinners. He should also pray that God may remove every scandal from his Church and give to his people priests that are according to his heart. "Rogate Dominum

messis, ut mittat operarios in messem suam."(Matt. ix, 38.)

The holy Church sees how her children have to wage continual war against the world with its bad example and its false maxims, against their own unruly passions, and against the devil with all his cunning and malice; she sees, moreover, how few there are who pray with confidence and perseverance; she therefore consecrates her priests for the express purpose of praying for the people and of supplying their lack of prayer.

The priest should pray apart, like Moses on the mountain, while the people are warring with the enemy in the vale below.

The priests are like the lofty trees on the mountain-top which draw the moisture from the clouds and communicate it to the earth. They should draw down God's grace by their prayers and communicate this grace to the people.

The duty of praying is one of the most important of all the priestly duties. One of the principal reasons why the Church consecrates so many priests is precisely that they may pray for the people. "Inter vestibulum et altare plorabunt sacerdotes, ministri Domini, et dicent: Parce, Domine, parce populo tuo." (Joel ii, 17.) Especially at the present day, the prayers of the priests seem more needed than ever. How many there are led astray by the world, the devil and their own passions. They need grace, but they will not pray for it.

The Church offers them her sacraments, but they neglect or despise them. The Church speaks to them through her learned and eloquent ministers; but they will not listen to the Word of God. The zealous priest

may even seek them out in their dwellings, but he often finds that his visits are fruitless. The Church has, therefore, but one means yet left, one last hope of their conversion—it is prayer, the heart-felt prayer of her priests, her consecrated servants. "Rogante pro eis sacerdote," says God himself in the Book of Leviticus, "propitius erit eis Dominus," (iv, 20.) O how many owe their salvation to the prayers of some fervent, virtuous priest!

The venerable Father Galuzzi, S. J., who died in Rome, 1731, in the odor of sanctity, once visited a certain prisoner who was raving like a madman. Threats and kind words were alike unavailing. At last the good priest turned to God like Moses and besought him with prayers and tears: "O Lord, forgive this unhappy sinner or blot out my name from the book of life!" After having prayed thus for some time, the good priest arose, went to the sinner, threw his arms round him and besought him to have pity on his soul. The stony heart of the sinner was softened at last. He made his confession with extraordinary contrition.

The priest must stand like Aaron between the just and holy God and the sinful people. He must seek to appease God by his humble and fervent prayers. "Stans inter mortuos et viventes pro populo deprecatus est et plaga cessavit." (Numb. xvi, 48.)

You hear so many priests complain: "I can do nothing with these people. They will not come to Mass; they will not come to the sermons; they will not come to confession." Ah! good friend, how many fervent prayers have you offered for them? what penance have you performed for them? "Some devils," says our Lord, "can be driven out only by prayer and fasting." "Non

est qui invocet nomen Domini," says the prophet. "Abscondisti faciem tuam a nobis, et allisisti nos in manu iniquitatis nostræ." (Isai. lxiv, 7.) "Illud constat," says the celebrated Soto, "posse impleri præcepta ecclesiæ, nec tamen impleri ipsum jus divinum. Itaque ne putent ministri ecclesiæ verbali illa pronuntiatione psalmorum et precum satisfecisse se obligationi illi, quæ, ex *jure divino*, pro suis et populi necessitatibus orare tenentur. Certe vita ministrorum ecclesiæ digne transigi non potest sine assiduitate spiritualium meditationum. Paulus dicit: 'Exerce teipsum ad pietatem.' (I Tim. iv, 7.) Quo exercitio et lectionem et meditationem et orationem etiam complexus est." (De vita sac. lect, 4.)

St. Bernard asserts that the prayers of the priest do more good to his people than even his preaching and his example. "Manent tria hæc: verbum, exemplum, oratio; major autem his oratio." (Epist. ad Bald, 201.) By his sermons and instructions the priest *teaches* the people how to do good; by his example he attracts and *encourages* them; but it is by his prayers alone that he obtains for them the grace to do good. St. Bernard also says that the priest must trust more to prayer than to all his labor and industry. "Orationi plus fidat quam industriæ et labori." (Ibid.)

Some years ago a good priest was called to a dying man. He was a stranger that had fallen sick while passing through the place. As soon as the priest entered the room, the sick man flew into a rage. "What do you want?" he shrieked. "What brings you hear? who sent for you?" The priest answered kindly: "The good people of the house here sent word that you were very sick, and so I have come to assist you." "You! assist

me!" shouted the sick man. "No! you can do nothing for me. No priest, no bishop, no pope can help me;" and the dying man poured forth a volley of curses and blasphemies. The good people present began to weep. The priest showed the dying sinner the crucifix and spoke to him of God's infinite love and mercy; but the dying sinner only put his hands to his ears and overwhelmed the priest with abuse. The priest at last turned to the people and said: "Let us kneel down and pray for this poor sinner. Let us pray to the Mother of God, the refuge of sinners." All fell on their knees and prayed with great fervor; but the dying wretch shouted and raved like a madman. As the people continued to pray, however, he became calmer. While the priest was reciting aloud the "Memorare," the dying man began to cry: "O my God! O my God!" The priest hastened to the bedside. "O! is there any hope for me?" cried the dying man. "Will God really forgive me?" The people left the room and the dying man made a good confession. (Kerschbaumer, Pater familias, 776.)

3. *The salvation of his own soul requires that the priest should be a man of prayer.*

Does not the priest need God's grace as much as others, nay, even more than others? Does he not need unshaken *patience?* He has so many difficulties to contend with. He has debts to pay, or a church or a school to build. He has children to instruct, rude, ignorant and ungrateful people to deal with. He is misunderstood, calumniated, perhaps blamed by his bishop when he really is innocent. Does he not need angelic prudence? Is he not often *sad and disheartened?* Everything seems to

go against him; and then the thought of the terrible account he will have to give to God of all the graces he has received and abused, of all the souls confided to his care! Is not the priest sometimes grievously *tempted?* Now our holy faith teaches that without the grace of God we cannot conquer every temptation. "Sine me nihil potestis facere," says our Lord. (John xv, 5.) Prayer is, therefore, necessary for the priest; he must necessarily be a man of prayer.

A pastor on entering upon his office, is placed in a position similar to that of Solomon when chosen king of Israel. He should, therefore, say to our Lord: "O Lord God, I am but a child, and know not how to go out and come in. And thy servant is in the midst of the people which thou hast chosen. Give, therefore, thy servant *an understanding heart to judge thy people, and to discern between good and evil.* For who shall be able to judge thy people"? (III kings, iii.) "God of my fathers and Lord of mercy, who hast made all things with thy word, and by thy wisdom hast appointed man that he should order the world according to equity and justice, and execute justice with an upright heart, give me wisdom that sitteth by thy throne, and cast me not off from among thy children; for I am thy servant, a weak man and of short time, and falling short of the understanding of judgment and laws. For if one be perfect among the children of men, yet if thy wisdom be not with him, he shall be considered as nothing. Send her out of thy holy heaven, and from the throne of thy majesty that she may be with me, that I may know what is acceptable to thee. For she knoweth and understandeth all things, and shall lead me soberly in my works

and shall preserve me by her power. So shall my works be acceptable and I shall govern thy people justly. For who among men is he, that can know the counsel of God? or who can think what the will of God is? For the thoughts of men are fearful, and our counsels uncertain. And hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon earth; but the things that are in heaven, who shall search out? And who shall know thy thoughts except thou give wisdom, and send thy holy spirit from above: and so the ways of them that are upon earth may be corrected, and men may learn the things that please thee." (Wisd. ix.) Solomon knew but too well that to direct men was the art of arts, and the science of sciences. He knew that in this art and science, no one can excel unless the wisdom of God is in him. "Wherefore," says he, "I wished, and understanding was given me, and I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came upon me." (Wisd. vii, 7.) Thus Solomon obtained this admirable gift by most fervent prayer. Indeed, in this science every one remains more or less blind until he is enlightened from above. "Yes," exclaims St. Augustine, "I should always have been blind hadst not thou, O Lord, vouchsafed to enlighten me." (Solil. c. v.)

Solomon asks of God this light of holy wisdom and obtains it. "Because thou hast asked this thing," said our Lord to him, "and hast not asked for thyself long life, nor riches, nor the lives of thine enemies, but hast asked for thyself *wisdom to discern judgment*, behold, I have done for thee according to thy words, and have given thee a wise and understanding heart, in so much that there hath been no one like thee before, nor shall arise after thee." (III. King, iii, 11.)

As God has called you to be a pastor of souls, rest assured that he will not fail to grant you wisdom enough to direct aright; "for the Lord does not call," says St. Bernardine of Sienna, "without giving at the same time, to those whom he calls, all that is requisite to accomplish the end for which he calls them." (Patroc. St. Joseph. Noct. III.) But remember, that this wisdom is granted only on condition that you, like the wise man, ask for it. "If any one of you want wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all men abundantly . . . and it shall be given him; but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." (James i, 5, 6.) "Hence," according to Balthasar Alvarez, S. J., "that pastor will exercise his office most successfully, who understands best how to treat with God about his spiritual and temporal affairs, although for the rest, he may be a man of no merit." Being but too well convinced of this truth, St. Vincent de Paul wrote to a pastor in the following terms: "What must you do, in order to instil into the hearts of those whom God has already intrusted, or will in future confide to your care, Christian dispositions and virtues, and to help them to attain perfection and salvation? This is not, indeed, the task of man, but of God and a continuation of the mission of Jesus Christ. Mere human care, then, will only injure the work, if the blessing of God is not upon it. No; it is not philosophy, nor theology, nor eloquence, which moves the heart. Christ, our Lord, must necessarily labor with us, and we with him. We must labor with him, and he with us. We must, like him, speak and teach only that doctrine which he taught. It is, therefore, necessary for you to divest yourself of self, in order to clothe yourself with Jesus Christ. Every cause

produces an effect similar to itself. When, therefore, he who guides and forms souls, is animated by the human spirit, what else is to be expected, than that those souls, influenced by this spirit, instead of practising true virtue, will assume only the bare appearance of it. No matter what he may do and say, he will communicate to them that spirit only, by which he himself is animated. On the contrary, if he is deeply grounded in the maxims of Jesus Christ, all his words and actions will be so many exhortations to the practice of virtue. However, before you can attain to this state, Jesus Christ our Lord must transform you into himself; for, as a wild tree bears sweet fruit after it has been grafted with a good branch, so it happens with us. Of ourselves, we are miserable creatures, thorny, wild trees: but when our Lord imprints upon our souls his own perfections, when he communicates to us the sap, as it were, of his own spirit, when he becomes united with us like the vine with the tendril, then we can do what he has done, our actions will become, as it were, divine, and we also "shall bear children to Jesus Christ our Lord," as St. Paul said of himself. Hence to be in constant communication with God by prayer is a most important point, to which you ought most seriously to apply. It is in prayer that you will find the instruction you need for the exercise of the duties of your office. If a doubt arise, go to God and say to him: "Lord, thou Father of Light, teach me what to do in this circumstance!" This practice I recommend to you not only for important matters, but also for all those things in which you are obliged to instruct others. First go and ask counsel of our Lord, after the example of Moses, who announced to the people nothing but what

he had previously heard from God. You must, therefore, have recourse to God by prayer, so that you may keep your own soul in his fear and love; for it is my duty to tell you, and you ought to know it, that many a one who leads others to salvation ruins himself. Whilst Saul yet lived in his father's house he was found worthy to be king; but when he sat upon the throne he fell into disgrace with God. Even St. Paul chastised his body, lest after he had preached and pointed out to others the way to heaven, he should himself become a cast-away. In order to avoid the misfortune of Saul and Judas, you must keep yourself closely united to God, often raising your heart and mind to him, in the following words: "Permit not, O Lord, that whilst I am trying to save others, I myself be lost! Be thou my Shepherd and do not refuse me those graces which, by virtue of my office, thou dost bestow through me on others." However, you ought to ask also what is necessary for your subjects. Be assured that you will do more by prayer than by any other means. Christ, our Lord, was not satisfied with preaching, laboring, fasting, nor even with the sacrifice of his blood and life. To all this he added prayer. He did not need it for himself. It was on our account that he prayed so much, in order to teach us to do the like; to pray not for ourselves only but for those also whose redeemer, as it were, we ought to be." This he so touchingly taught his disciples in his last discourse: "I pray for them," he says, "I pray not for the world, but for them whom thou hast given me,—Holy Father, keep them in thy name whom thou hast given me: that they may be one, as we also are one. I do not ask that thou take them away out of the world, but that thou

preserve them from evil. Sanctify them in truth. And not for them only do I pray, but for those also who through their word shall believe in me: that they all may be one, as thou Father in me and I in thee, that they may be also one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. Father, I will that where I am, they also whom thou hast given me, may be with me; that they may see my glory, which thou hast given me." (John xvii.) And again he says: "Behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." (Luke xxii, 31.)

The venerable Father Hoffbauer, C.SS.R., when asked on his death-bed who, in his opinion, should be appointed as Vicar-General. "The tall Frenchman," he answered, meaning Father Passerat; and the reason he gave for his choice was, because this Father knew how to pray well.

St. Frances de Chantal wrote to a Superior: "Be humble and love to hold intercourse with God; and then he will work wonders in you and your daughters;" and in another letter she says: "Be not troubled at the charges imposed upon you; but fulfil them with humility, meekness, and simplicity of heart without considering your incapacity. The less there is of self, the more there will be of God. Look straight to him in all your actions, and do not stop at creatures. Often ask the assistance of the Holy Ghost, and be faithful to follow the lights and inspirations he will give you."

"A pastor," says St. Francis of Assisi, "ought to be a man of prayer and a lover of this holy exercise: but he should divide his time in such a manner, as to have certain hours set apart for himself and others for his flock. He ought to offer up the Holy Sacrifice early in the

morning, giving himself a long time for this sacred action, so that he may devoutly implore the protection of God for himself and his flock," according to the example of Job who," rising up early,offered holocausts for every one of his children: For he said: "Lest perhaps my sons have sinned and have blessed God in their hearts. So did Job all days." (Job. i, 5.)

"Give me a man of prayer," said St. Vincent De Paul, "and all things will succeed well with him. He will be able to say with the Apostle: 'I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me.' The Congregation of the Mission will prosper only as long as the fathers persevere in the exercise of prayer. Prayer is an impregnable bulwark, which will protect the priests of the Mission against every assault. It is a spiritual armory, a tower of David, from which they may supply themselves with every kind of weapons, both offensive and defensive. With these arms they will conquer all the enemies of God and of his kingdom.

"It is most desirable that the priests of the Mission devote themselves in a particular manner to prayer; for without it, their labor will be of little or no avail, whilst on the contrary, with prayer they will touch hearts and convert souls. Little good is to be expected from a man who does not love to commune with God, and all failures in the performance of duty, proceed from the fact that prayer and familiar intercourse with God are neglected."—"Without the practice of prayer, every pastor is sterile, imperfect, and bordering on his downfall," says St. Bonaventure. (De Progr. Relig.) Woe to those pastors who do not possess the spirit of prayer! Woe to them, "because they are in great danger of dy-

ing under the torture of so many crosses, as martyrs without merit and without a crown." (Father Torres.) Woe to them, because through them, their parishes commence to become barren and imperfect, and take the first steps towards their downfall. As the shepherd is, so is the flock. If pastors are wanting in love and zeal for prayer, their subjects will also be deficient in this point. Where there is no prayer, everything goes wrong. Tepidity creeps in, the soul becomes despondent and weak, and loses the strength and vitality which it once possessed. All its good resolutions and dispositions gradually disappear and the passions begin to awaken and clamor. Then man perceives that he is again a lover of idle pleasure and talk, of mirth, dissipation and the like. What is still worse, the inclination to vanity, anger, envy, ambition and passions which had appeared to be dead, spring up again. For this reason St. Francis of Assisi says: "A pastor should aspire, in a special manner, to the spirit of prayer; for, without it, no fruit can be expected in the service of God. But, with the gift of prayer all else may be hoped for."

On the words, "If Moses and Samuel shall stand before me," (Jeremias xv, 1) Cornelius à Lapide remarks as follows: "Samuel and Moses are named here, in preference to others, because they were very holy and the leaders of the people. Their power with God was so great and their prayers were so efficacious, that they stayed the anger of God by praying for the ungrateful and rebellious people. This was because they were the leaders and judges of the people, and the mediators between God and them. They were the faithful friends of God and loved the people with burning charity, notwith-

standing their refractory and rebellious behavior. For these two virtues, prayer and charity, particularly when exercised toward rebels and enemies, become those who direct others; they move and, as it were, compel God to hear their prayers." St. Jerome, St. Thomas, Theodore Hugo and others, speak in like manner.

"You have not gone up to face your enemy, nor have you set up a wall for the house of Israel." (Ezech. xiii, 5.) God blames the false prophets for not having mended the vices of the people, and turned away the wrath of God by prayer. "Hence learn," says Cornelius à Lapide, "how great the spirit of prayer, the zeal and piety of a superior and preacher ought to be, that he may stand like a wall before an angry God." Moses acted in this manner when he said: "Either forgive them this trespass, or if thou do not, strike me out of the book that thou has written." (Exod. xxxii, 32.) And St. Paul says: "For I wished myself to be an anathema from Christ for my brethren." (Rom. ix, 3) . . In like manner, when the wrath of God was raging against the murmurers, Aaron offered up incense, and standing between the dead and the living, he stayed the anger of the Lord and the stroke." (Numb. xvi, 48.) "Therefore, thus saith the Lord of Hosts the God of Israel: There shall not be wanting a man of the race of Jonadab, the son of Rechab (a priest of Jesus Christ) standing before me forever" (Jerem. xxxv, 19) but let him "Arise, give praise in the night in the beginning of the watches: let him pour out his heart like water before the face of the Lord: let him lift up his hand to him for the life of his little children, that they may not faint from hunger." (Jer. ii, 19.)

CHAPTER IV.

Necessity of Meditation or Mental Prayer.

All spiritual writers unite in declaring that meditation is not only useful for the priest, but strictly necessary. "Absque meditationis exercitio," says Gerson, "nullus, secluso miraculo Dei, ad Christianæ religionis normam attingit." (De Medit. cons, 7.) St. Alphonsus says that a priest who does not practise mental prayer will *hardly be saved;* he cannot possibly *attain perfection.*

A priest, to be saved, must fulfil all his duties. Now this he cannot do without God's assistance; and this assistance God will not give unless we pray for it. "Petite et accipietis." (John xvi, 24.) Therefore he who does not ask will not receive. Now he will not ask earnestly and perseveringly for God's help who is not fully aware of his obligations or of the dangers that surround him. But how can he know the obligations and the dangers of his state who never meditates on them?

The impressions made on us at the time of our ordination, the high idea we then had of our holy vocation and its obligations,all these will soon pass away,unless we lead a life of prayer and meditation. In our fallen state, we easily become accustomed to everything, no matter how solemn or sacred. It is only by continual prayer and meditation that we keep alive in our souls the esteem and love of our holy vocation and the knowledge of our many obligations and dangers. He, therefore, who does not pray and meditate will live in ignorance of the many ob-

ligations and dangers of his state; he will consequently not pray for God's help earnestly and perseveringly; he will not fulfil the duties of his state; he will, therefore, hardly save his soul.

Cardinal Bellarmine asserts that it is morally impossible for a Christian to fulfil all his duties unless he practises mental prayer. Now if an ordinary Christian cannot do this, how will the priest do it?

The obligations of the priest are as far above those of the ordinary Christian as heaven is above earth. St. Teresa, speaking of mental prayer, says: "If this gate be closed, I know not whence the soul can receive those graces that it needs." And St. Alphonsus adds: "I know not whence the priest, who does not practise mental prayer, will receive those graces that he needs to save his soul."

To fulfil many and difficult obligations the priest needs special lights, zeal, and strength. Now these he cannot obtain without mental prayer and meditation. The priest must keep himself pure amid the many dangers and temptations that surround him. But how will he guard against these dangers when he does not even know them? And how shall he know them? By sad experience? That knowledge comes too late; it is too dearly bought. It is only in prayer and meditation that he sees things in their true light. There he sees his faults, his weakness, his natural inclination to sin. There God gives him some of that light he shall have at the hour of death. "Accedite ad eum et illuminamini." (Ps. 33.)

The priest must be continually on his guard against his passions, "Capite nobis vulpes parvulas, quæ demoliuntur vineas," says Holy Writ. (Cant. II. 15.)

These little foxes are our evil inclinations, our habitual faults. But shall he resist his evil inclinations when he is not even aware of them? He examines his conscience so rarely, so carelessly. He goes so seldom to confession. Many of the saints went to confession every day. He often lets a whole month pass without confession.

"In this land of darkness," says St. Bonaventure, "prayer is the torch that lights our steps." (De act. sal. tit. Q, c. 5.) "Mental prayer," says St. Bernard, "is like a mirror." If there is any stain on your face, you will look in the mirror and see it at once and instantly wash it away. If you have no mirror, you do not see the stain; you do not even think of washing it away. So it is precisely with mental prayer. If you have committed a fault, or if you are in danger of sinning, as soon as you betake yourself to prayer, you notice the fault, you perceive the danger, you seek at once to free yourself from them. And even had you the misfortune to fall into sin, even grievous sin, if you continue the practice of mental prayer and meditation, you will soon rise again. "Mortal sin and mental prayer cannot exist together," says a certain spiritual writer. You will have to give up one or the other.

"No matter how low one has fallen," says St. Teresa, "if he continues the practice of mental prayer, God will certainly lead him to the port of salvation." (In vita, c. 8.) He, however, who does not pray continues to sin. He walks in darkness; he does not see the sad state of his soul.

Suppose, for instance, a priest has been insulted, or as he thinks, treated unjustly; the first and most natural

feeling will be to have revenge; but next morning he makes his meditation; he thinks of the insults our Lord endured for his sake; he thinks of the damned in hell, how they are insulted by the devils; he thinks of his own sins, and he says with Jesus on the cross: "Father, forgive them."

"Make a quarter of an hour's meditation every day," says St. Teresa, "and I will promise you heaven."

The priest is a confessor, a spiritual director: he must therefore study the science of the saints that he may be able to lead others to perfection.

The priest must not only absolve sin, he must also plant, he must also build up the spiritual edifice. He must guide his penitents according to the maxims of the saints; he must be able to teach them how to practise mental prayer and meditation. But how can he do this when he does not himself practise mental prayer nor follow the maxims of the saints? "As the practice of prayer is necessary for all," says Louis of Granada, "it is a great injustice to the lay people not to teach them how to pray." (Bulla Bened. xiv. 6, Dec. 1746.)

St. Alphonsus says, moreover, that one soul that strives after perfection is dearer to God than a thousand careless ones. It is certain that there would be more pious and virtuous souls in the world, if the priests themselves had more piety. In almost every parish you will find one or the other chosen soul that could easily be led to a life of perfection; but the confessor himself, perhaps, knows little about such a life and often cares less. How many a vocation to the priesthood and to the religious state might be found, if there were only some good priest

to cultivate and encourage them? On the contrary, how many are encouraged to enter the priesthood, how many are sent to the convent who have no vocation, whose lives are unhappy and who end by giving scandal; and all because the confessor was not a man of prayer; he did not ask light of the Holy Ghost; he did not study or follow the maxims of the saints, the principles of the spiritual life.

To announce the Word of God with fruit, the priest must practise meditation.

"Vita activa," says St. Thomas, "secundum quam aliquis prædicando contemplata aliis tradit, præsupponit abundantiam contemplationis." (Q. Q. Quæst, 188. a 6 in c.) "Oratio facit oratorem," says the proverb. By the practice of *meditation* the priest learns to know himself, his weakness, his evil inclinations, the necessity of God's grace, the hatefulness of sin, and consequently he prays more frequently and fervently.

The practice of meditation enlightens the mind, helps the priest in his studies and gives him great facility and readiness in preaching. How many of the saints, though poorly educated, even simple women, became the most enlightened theologians, by the practice of mental prayer. The breviary says even of the great St. Thomas: "Dicere solebat, se quidquid sciret, non tam studio peperisse quam divinitus traditum accepisse." (Vita.)

The priest who practises meditation will be able to preach from his heart. "Ex abundantia cordis os loquitur." The priest cannot convince and touch others, unless he is thoroughly convinced himself of what he says. This he will not be unless he meditates often, unless he is entirely penetrated with his subject. "The heart speaks to

the heart," as St. Francis de Sales so well expressed it; that is, the preacher must himself feel and practise what he preaches.

The priest who practises mental prayer and meditation will be able to save many souls.

A young priest once asked the eloquent Father Avila what was the most necessary quality of true eloquence. "The most necessary quality of true eloquence," answered the saintly priest, "is to love our Lord Jesus Christ with a burning love." "To convert many souls," says St. Alphonsus, "a priest must be, not so much a man of great talent, as a man of prayer. A priest of moderate talents, but filled with true zeal and the spirit of prayer, will save more souls than many who are learned but lukewarm."

Objections.

The devil who is the sworn enemy of *mental* prayer and meditation, suggests a thousand difficulties and objections to those who undertake this pious practice. You hear so often the common objection: "I cannot meditate." St. Alphonsus says: "If during the whole meditation you can do nothing else than say: 'O Jesus, have mercy on me!' your time is well spent; such a meditation will do you a great deal of good."

Another common objection is: "I have no time to meditate, I have too much to do." To this St. Lawrence Justinian answers: "Fallitur quisquis opus hoc periculosum absque orationis præsidio consummare se posse putat. In via deficit, si ab interna maneat refectione jejunus." (De fust. præl, c. 11.)

St. Bernard also answers this objection in his advice to Pope Eugene: "Timeo tibi, Eugeni, ne multitudo nego-

tiorum, intermissa oratione et consideratione, te ad cor durum perducat." (De Consid. l. 1, c. 2) "The true laborer in the vineyard of the Lord," says Father Alverez, "is not he who hears many confessions and neglects the practice of piety, but he who leads a life of piety himself and who thereby leads his penitents to perfection.

St. Alphonsus also answers the objections of those who say they can find no time for meditation, as they are too busy in hearing confessions, in preaching, in visiting the sick, etc.: "To labor for the salvation of souls," he says, "is praiseworthy. To neglect yourself, however, while laboring for others, is not praiseworthy. We must first of all try to secure our own salvation; we must pray first for ourselves, and then we may labor for the salvation of others."

The Apostles had certainly as much to do as any of us; they had the whole world to teach and yet they would not suffer worldly cares to hinder them from prayer. They therefore called the deacons to their aid. "Nos autem," they said, "instantes erimus orationi et prædicationi verbi Dei." They say expressly *prayer* and preaching; for without prayer, preaching will be of little avail.

This too has been the rule of acting of all the saints. St. Vincent Ferrer usually prayed a whole hour before preaching.

St. Charles Borromeo ordained no one who was not well grounded in the science of prayer. The following are some of the questions proposed to all candidates for Holy Orders according to the Council of Milan: "Si in orationis studio usque versatus sit? Quibus meditationibus instructus Deum tacitus oret? Qui orationis modus? Qui illius fructus quæve utilitates? Quot quibusve par-

tibus illa constet? Quæ regulæ præparationis et orationem? etc.

Father John Avila, says positively: "He who has no love for mental prayer, and who is not firmly resolved to remove everything that could hinder him from acquiring the spirit of prayer—such a one should not think of becoming a priest; and if he is a priest, he has reason to tremble for his salvation, unless he spends at least a short time every day in mental prayer.

The priest also needs supernatural strength.

He has to wage continual war against the world, the flesh and the devil. He has to fight against the bad example, the false maxims of the world; he has to fight against his own unruly passions; he has especially to fight against the terrible temptations of Satan. "O how much more eagerly the devil strives to ruin a priest than a mere lay man," says St. Alphonsus. And why? Because by ruining a priest the devil gives greater offence to God, and causes greater harm to souls. A priest never fails alone. He draws many souls with him to perdition. The priest receives, it is true, the grace of Holy Orders; but this grace does not make him an angel. Even after ordination, the priest is still a weak human being. He has indeed the grace of prayer; he can pray when he is tempted; but the question is, will he pray when the temptation comes? I fear not. He who does not practise meditation, will not lead an interior life, he will neither see his danger nor have the strength to conquer when the temptation comes. "He who omits mental prayer," says St. Teresa, "needs no devil to cast him into hell, he casts himself into it." (Vita.)

The priest is called to perfection; but he cannot lead a perfect life without the practice of mental prayer.

Jesus himself is the model which the priest is bound to imitate. "Exemplum enim dedi vobis," he says to every priest, "ut quemadmodum ego feci, ita et vos faciatis," (John xiii.) No one, however, can resemble this divine model without meditating on his life and virtues, without asking his assistance. "Sine me," he says, "nihil potestis facere."

CHAPTER V.

The Mystery of Love—The Priest's Greatest Treasure.

"God is love." This is the language in which everything speaks to us in heaven and on earth. But nothing in heaven or on earth speaks this in such burning words as the Mystery of Love—the Blessed Eucharist, the last legacy of love.

True love knows no bounds, feels no burden, cares for no hardship. It believes that it may and can do all things. Such is true love; such is the love of Jesus Christ. To gain our love he thinks that he may and can do all things. Hence those strange abasements, those mysterious humiliations of the God-man, in presence of which reason is astounded, the senses revolt, the heart is terrified, and unbelief repeats its ceaseless question, "How is this possible?" But a voice proceeds from the altar, and that voice answers us: "It is thus that God has loved the world."

The pretended impossibilities of faith are nothing else than the ineffable condescensions of a God who loves us as God; the height, the breadth, the depth of *all* the mysteries of our holy faith, are but the height, the breadth, and the depth of the charity of Jesus Christ. His blood, which was shed to the last drop, is his title to the most beautiful of all royalties, the royalty of love. His crown of thorns is the diadem of love. His crib, and cross, and altar, are the thrones of love, and the reception of his body and blood is the banquet of love.

We read in Holy Scripture that King Assuerus, to manifest the riches and glory of his kingdom, made a solemn feast which lasted a hundred and fourscore days. Jesus Christ, the king of kings, has also vouchsafed to manifest the riches of his treasures, and the majesty of his glory in a feast worthy of his greatness; it is the heavenly banquet of Holy Communion in which he gives himself entirely to us. This heavenly feast is not confined to the short space of a few days like that of King Assuerus. It has already lasted more than eighteen hundred years. We partake of it every day, and it will continue even to the end of the world. "Come," exclaims the royal prophet, "come and behold the works of God, the prodigious things he has wrought upon earth." (Ps. xlv. 9.)

How admirable are the wisdom and depth of his counsels! How wonderful are the means which God's love uses for the salvation of men!

The incarnation is a miracle of divine love and wisdom so great and so deep that the human mind can never fathom it. The passion and death of our Lord give us an awful and unspeakable illustration of divine love. The last legacy of the love of Jesus combines both those mysteries in one mystery so stupendous that the very conception of it overwhelms the soul. "Having loved his own, he loved them to the end;" and, in the fulness of that love, the end was the grandest illustration of his unutterable love.

Jesus, our Father, in leaving us, wished to combine, in one institution so much love and charity, that man, on beholding it, could no longer withhold his affection. Our dear Lord said: "I will unlock the barred gates of Paradise; I will place again in the midst of it the Tree of

Life, "that he who eateth of it may not die." And the angels shall minister to the being with whom I become one; and he shall shine with a brilliancy that even the Father will admire, a brilliancy that will attract him and the Holy Ghost to come thither and abide there. And thus I shall make the soul of my beloved a temple, and a throne, and a heaven, and I will dwell there forevermore.

Ponder well, my soul, this awful privilege—union with Christ. The Lord of heaven is your guest; he is made one with you as two pieces of wax are melted into each other. We become one with God! One with the eternal! One with the Most Holy! Oh, how little and vain are all the honors and treasures of this world when compared with the overwhelming dignity of being one with God! How can we ever lose sight of the sublime thought. "This is life eternal to know Thee, the true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." It is "life eternal" to know Jesus "in the breaking of bread," in the Blessed Sacrament.

As soon as we are one with him, we share in what he possesses: we enjoy his happiness, we live his own immortal life! "He who eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him, and I will raise him up on the last day." (St. John.)

"So dearly has God loved the world that he has given his only-begotten Son to be the life of the world." "God is love," and this sweet Sacrament is the mystery of his love. It was on the eve of his passion, the very night when men were plotting his ruin, when they decided to condemn him to a most shameful death, that Jesus left us this living pledge of his love. He did not

leave a memorial of bronze or marble, as the great ones of this world leave behind them; no, he left his own living, lifegiving Body and Blood—he left himself. Did not God tell us long ago by the mouth of his prophet, that his delight was to be with the children of men? Did he not assure us with his own blessed lips, "that he would not leave us orphans, but that he would be with us always, even to the end of the world?" "God is love." He loves us with an infinite love. He has given us this earth, he has given us heaven; but all this does not satisfy his love. He gives us himself, his body and blood, his soul and divinity. No wonder that God complains: "What more could I do for thee, beloved soul, than I have done?" Yes, in this Sacrament, God has exhausted his Omnipotence; for, though he is all-powerful, he cannot do more for us than he has done. He has exhausted his infinite wisdom; for though he is all-wise, he cannot invent a more wonderful proof of his love. He has exhausted his infinite wealth; for in this Sacrament he has poured out all the treasures of his unfathomable love.

God is love, and he gives himself to us in the disguise of love. What an act of charity to a poor weak-sighted mortal to hide the dazzling light from his eyes! and what loving kindness in our dear Lord to hide his dazzling splendor from our weak, sinful souls! Were he to appear in his glory, who is there that could look upon him and live? If we look into the sun but for a moment, we are blinded by its brightness; how then could we gaze upon the unveiled splendors of the Eternal Sun of Justice? The Prophet Daniel saw only an angel, and he fainted away; how then could we bear the sight of the

King of angels? When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, where he had been conversing with God, his face shone with such unearthly lustre that the people could not look upon him. He had to veil his face so that all might see him and speak to him. Now, if men were unable to look upon the face of a man, how shall we be able to look upon the face of God? The Apostles beheld on Mount Thabor but a faint glimpse of the glory of Jesus, and they fell prostrate on the ground. St. John, while in Patmos, beheld only in a vision the glory of Jesus, and he fell to the ground as if dead. How then can we, poor, weak sinners, bear to gaze on the entire fulness of the splendors of God's infinite Majesty? Oh, what loving goodness then in Jesus, our Lord, to hide his glory behind the veils of the Sacrament, that we may approach him and speak to him without fear, as a child to its father, as a friend to a friend.

Our divine Redeemer took many forms to attract the love of man. That God who is unchangeable appeared at one time as a little babe in a crib; at another as an exile in Egypt; now he appears as a docile child among the Doctors of the law, and again as an apprentice in the workshop of St. Joseph: now he appears as a servant in the house of Nazareth, and again as the good shepherd, seeking the lost sheep of Israel; now he is the physician of body and soul, curing diseases, and forgiving sins, and again he appears as a malefactor, bleeding to death on the cross; now he is the conqueror of death and hell, the glorious king of heaven and earth, and finally he shows himself as bread upon the altar.

Jesus chose to exhibit himself to us in these various guises; but whatever character he assumed, it was always that of a lover. Is it not strange that God who

is so good, so amiable, should be forced to have recourse to so many stratagems to win our love? He commands us to love him, he promises heaven if we obey, and he threatens with the flames of hell if we refuse.

To win our love he has, as it were, annihilated himself. He annihilated himself in the Incarnation, but he has gone even still farther in the mystery of the Holy Eucharist. Ah! my Lord, canst thou devise anything else to make thyself loved? "Make known his inventions," exclaims the prophet Isaias. (xii, 4.) Go, O redeemed souls! go and publish everywhere the loving devices of this loving God—the devices which he has planned and executed to win our love. After lavishing so many of his gifts upon us, he has been pleased to bestow himself, and to bestow himself in so wonderful a manner.

If a king speaks a confidential word to one of his vassals, if he smiles upon him, how honored and happy does that vassal consider himself! How much more honored and happy would he be were the king to seek his friendship, were he to request his company every day at table, were he to assign to him an abode in his own palace.

Ah! my king, my beloved Jesus, thou hast come down from heaven, and still daily comest down upon earth to be with men as thy brothers, and to give thyself wholly to them from the excess of the love thou bearest them! "He loved us, and delivered himself up for us." "Yes," exclaims St. Augustine, "this most loving and most merciful God, through his love to men, chose to give him not only his goods, but even his very self." The affection which this sovereign Lord entertains towards us sinful creatures, is so immense that it induced him to

give himself wholly to us. He was born for us, he lived for us, he died for us, he even offered up his life and all his blood for us every day in the Mass.

O power of divine love! The greatest of all has made himself the lowest of all! Love triumphs even over God. God who can never be conquered by any one, has been conquered by love!

What breast so savage as not to soften before such a God of love on the altar; what hardness will such love not subdue, what love does it not claim? Thus he would appear and stay with us, who wished to be loved and not feared. Even the very brutes, if we do them a kindness, if we give them some trifle, are grateful for it. They come near us, they do our bidding after their own fashion, and show signs of gladness at our approach. How comes it, then, that we are so ungrateful towards God—the same God who has bestowed his whole self upon us, who descends every day upon our altars to become the food of our souls!

Love is the loadstone of love. If you wish to be loved, you must love. There is no more effectual means to secure the affections of another than to love him and to show him that you love him. Ah! my Jesus, this rule holds good for others, holds good for all, but not for thee! Men are grateful to all, but not to thee. Thou art at a loss what more to do, to show men the love thou bearest them. Thou hast positively nothing more left to do to allure the affections of men, and yet how many are there among men who really love thee? Ah! God has not deserved such treatment from us!

O man, whoever thou art, thou hast witnessed the love which God has borne thee in becoming man, in suffering

and dying for thee, and in giving himself to thee as food. How long will it be before God shall know, by experience and by deeds, the love thou bearest him! Indeed, every man at the sight of God clothed in flesh, and choosing a life of such durance, and a death of such ignominy, choosing to dwell a loving prisoner in our churches, every one, I say, ought to be enkindled with love towards so loving a God. "Oh! that thou wouldst rend the heavens, and wouldst come down; the mountains would melt away at Thy presence, the waters would burn with fire." (Isai. lxiv. 1–2.) It was thus the prophet cried out before the arrival of the divine Word upon earth. Oh! that thou wouldst deign to leave the heavens and to descend upon earth and become man amongst us! On beholding thee like one of themselves the mountains would melt away: that is, men would surmount all obstacles, all difficulties in the way of observing thy laws and thy counsels; the waters would burn with fire! Surely, thou wouldst enkindle such a furnace of love in the human heart, that even the most frozen souls would catch the flame of Thy blessed love! And, in truth, after the Incarnation of the Son of God, how brilliantly has the fire of divine love shown in many souls! It may be asserted without fear of contradiction that God was more loved in one century after the coming of Jesus Christ than in the entire four centuries preceding. How many youths, how many nobles, how many monarchs have abandoned wealth, honor and power, and sought the desert and the cloister, in order to give themselves up unreservedly to the love of their Saviour? How many martyrs have gone rejoicing to torments and to death! How many tender virgins have refused the proffered hand of the great ones of

this world, in order to live and die for Jesus Christ, and thus repay, in some measure, the affection of a God who loved them to such excess!

Yes, all this is most true, but now comes a tale for tears. Has this been the case with all men? Have all sought thus to correspond with this immense love of Jesus Christ? Alas, the greater part have combined to repay him with nothing but ingratitude! And what sort of return have we ourselves made up to this time for the love our God has borne us? Have we always shown ourselves thankful? Have we ever seriously reflected what those words mean—a God to be made man, to die for us and become our food? What more could Jesus Christ have done to win our love? If the Son of God had engaged to rescue from death his own Father, to what lower humiliation could he stoop than to assume human flesh and lay down his life in sacrifice for his salvation, and to renew this Sacrifice every day, in every holy Mass? Nay, had Jesus Christ been a mere man instead of one of the Divine Persons, had he wished to gain by some token of affection, the love of his God, what more could he have done for him? If a servant of ours had given out of love for us his very life-blood, would he not have riveted our heart to him, and obliged us to love him for very gratitude at least? How comes it, then, that Jesus Christ, though he has laid down his life for us and lays it down daily in Mass hundreds of times, has still failed to win our love?

To love God, how beautiful a thing it is! Man was created by love; it is on this account that he is so prone to love. On the other hand, man is so great that nothing on this earth can satisfy him. It is only when he turns

to God that he feels contented and happy. Take a fish out of the water and it will die. Well! such is man without God. Oh! how blessed a thing it is that we can please God, little and low as we are! If a lost soul could but once say, "My God, I love thee," it would be no longer in hell. But, alas for that poor soul, it has lost the power to love which it had received, and which it refused to use. Its heart is dried up like a bunch of grapes which has passed through the press. There is no more happiness in that soul, no more peace, because no more love. "Unhappy souls," says St. Teresa, "they do not love." The goodness of God kindles the fire of hell. The lost will say: Oh, if God had loved us less, we should suffer less; hell would be more endurable. But to have been so much loved, what anguish!

Alas! men hold in contempt the divine love, because they do not, or rather let us say, because they will not, understand what a treasure it is to enjoy Divine Grace, an infinite treasure. Men appreciate the good graces of a prince, of a prelate, of a nobleman, of a man of letters, and yet these same persons set no value on the grace of God, but renounce it for mere smoke, for a brutal gratification, for a handful of earth, for a whim, for nothing.

Do we wish to be ranked among these ungrateful ones? Can we find ourselves something better than God? Can we find ourselves a prince more courteous, a master, a brother, a friend, more amiable, who has shown us a deeper love? Can we seek for ourselves one who is better qualified than God to make us happy in the present life and in the life to come?

Whoever loves God has nothing to fear, and God cannot help loving in turn one who loves him: "I love

those who love me." (Prov. viii, 17.) And what shall he dread of, who is the beloved of God? "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?" (Ps. xxvi, 1.) So said David, and so said the sisters of Lazarus to our dear Lord: "He whom thou lovest is sick." (John xi, 5.) It was enough for them to know that he would do everything for his recovery. But how, on the other hand, can God love those who despise his love?

Come, then, let us once for all make the resolution to give the tribute of our love to a God who has so sincerely loved us. The kings of the earth glory in the possession of kingdoms and of wealth: Jesus Christ rests content with the sovereignty of our hearts. This he considers his principality, and this principality he sought to obtain by dying on the Cross.

Since Jesus Christ, then, has given himself to each one, what great thing will a man do if he gives himself wholly to Jesus Christ? Let us, with a good will, give our heart and our love to this God, who in order to gain it, has had to give his blood, his life, his whole self.

But this heart he will not have divided; he will have it whole and entire; he wishes us to love him with our whole heart, otherwise he is not content. Aware that man, had he been redeemed by a seraph, would have had to divide his heart by partly loving his Creator and partly his Redeemer, God, who would possess the entire heart, and the entire love of man, wished, therefore, to be both our Creator and our Redeemer. And let us understand that we shall give our whole heart to God when we give him our will entirely, not wishing anything henceforward but what God wishes, who certainly desires only our welfare and happiness. "To this end Christ died and rose

again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. Therefore, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's." (Rom. xiv, 8.) Jesus was pleased to die for us, and be our perpetual Victim upon our altars; more than this he could not have done to win all our love, and to be the sole Lord of our heart, so that from this day forward we are bound to make known to heaven and to earth, in life and in death, that we are no longer our own, but belong solely and entirely to God.

How God longs to see, and how dearly he loves a heart that is wholly his! What delicate and loving caresses does he show, what good things, what delights, what glory does he prepare in Paradise for a heart that is wholly his! Devout souls, if Jesus gain us, we shall also gain Jesus. The advantage of such an exchange is all on our side. "Teresa," said our Lord one day to this saint, "Teresa, up to this time you have not been all mine; now that you are all mine, be assured that I am all yours." Love is a bond which binds the lover with the loved one. God has every wish to clasp and unite us to himself; but it is also necessary for us to strive and unite ourselves to God. If we wish God to give himself entirely to us, it is likewise necessary for us to give ourselves entirely to him, loving him with our whole heart, with our whole soul, with all our strength, so that not one fibre may be left in us which does not belong to God. According to the degree of love which we bear towards God when we finish the journey of life, will be the degree of love with which we shall continue to love God for all eternity. He, then, who would love God exceedingly in heaven, must love him very much on earth.

St. Paul exclaimed: "If any man does not love our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema"—let him be accursed. Let him be accursed by God the Father, accursed by God the Son, accursed by God the Holy Ghost. Let him be accursed by angels and by men. Let him be accursed by the very demons in hell. Let him be accursed by *all creatures* for refusing to love our Lord and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

Such is the language that the great Apostle St. Paul, the ardent lover of the Lord, uses towards all who refuse to turn upon their God the force of that ever active principle of love which was implanted in them by their Creator, which will never suffer them to rest, and which if not directed to him will turn them into their own greatest enemies.

As no class of men can be more deeply interested in the great mystery of love of our holy religion than the priests of the Catholic Church, it is to them in particular that these words of St. Paul apply. By the world at large, perhaps, such language will be but little understood. Surrounded with vanities, buried in spiritual sloth, and accustomed only to the language and sentiments of a profane passion, it knows not of any other, and when we attempt to raise its grovelling affections to the sublime love of an all-perfect God, and even support the exertion with all the force of the wonder of the mystery of love, it is all insensible; it hears us with indifference, if not with impatience, and coolly gives back the neglected lesson to the contemplative inmates of the cloister and the sanctuary. Let us, then, my brethren, gladly take it for ourselves. We have no ties upon the world, nor has the world any ties upon us; we have seen through,

and despised the emptiness of its boasted advantages, and have nothing left but to pursue with ardor that better part which we have chosen. To us, then, the impressive lessons of this tremendous mystery will be read with more effect.

Indeed, we have an additional motive to learn it well, for we are called to be the ministers and delegates of Jesus Christ—our High Priest on earth ; we are the depositaries of that sacred fire which one day burned with such vehemence on Mount Calvary, and has ever since continued to burn on our altars with undiminished intensity ; and we are to scatter and enkindle it through a frozen world. With what eagerness then ought we to cherish the sacred affection and light it up betimes in our own bosoms. And how shall we so effectually do it as in the contemplation of the Eucharistic Sacrifice? Yes, my brethren, it was here the Apostles grew inflamed, it was the recollection of this wonderful divine love that carried them through all their labors, and made sufferings and death their glory and their gain. And truly this is the grand compendium of all our studies. Here they centre, or are reducible to this—the knowledge and love of a crucified God in the Holy Eucharist. This sacred lesson once learned well, would supply every deficiency ; it would fill us at once with true wisdom, and inspire us with genuine eloquence. Whereas, without it, though possessed of all the sciences, we should be deplorably ignorant ; though adepts in human eloquence, we should be no better than sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.

If then, my brethren, in the multiplicity and distraction of other pursuits we have too often lost sight of this

grand study, let this day at least terminate the omission, and be our day of introduction to a new school.

If the love of Jesus on the altar has hitherto been to us a veiled mystery, and the holy Mass a "hidden treasure," oh! let them be so no longer, lest slighted tenderness turn to anger, and grace abused call down retributive vengeance. Let us henceforward make this mystery one of the most prominent subjects of our daily meditation and discourse to the people. Let us frequently place ourselves at the foot of the altar; let us look up with feeling affection at that sublime and expressive Host. The saints assure us that God regards with complacency even the sinner who looks devoutly upon the image of Christ. The hardest rocks are excavated by time, the coldest bodies become warm by repeated application to the fire. Though now perhaps unfeeling, we shall in time yield to the powerful impression on some destined day; the moving spectacle of an amiable God, mystically slain and expiring every day out of love for us, with expanded arms, as it were, inviting us into his embraces, will touch us with sensibility. A ray will beam from the Sacred Host upon our understandings, a spark will fall from it upon our frozen hearts. Surprised and delighted with the new sensation, we shall cherish it with ardor. Meditation will fan the flame; increasing grace will enlarge and expand it, and raise it at last into a conflagration which even the corrupt and unfriendly air of a surrounding world will thenceforth have no power to damp or extinguish.

What a great privilege to be able to love God. "It is a gift," says St. Alphonsus, "which we must ask of God every day of our life."

St. Francis de Sales says that the gift of divine love should be the object of all our prayers, because it brings with it all the other good gifts of God. Love is the golden chain by which the soul is united and bound to her God. "Charity," says St. Paul, "is the bond of perfection." Every act of love is a treasure which secures to us the friendship of God. "I love them that love me." (Prov. viii, 17.) "He that loveth me shall be loved by my Father." (John xiv, 21.) "Charity covereth a multitude of sins." (1 Peter iv, 8.) St. Thomas teaches that every act of love merits a degree of eternal glory. Acts of love may be made, first, in the following manner: "My God, I love Thee with my heart. I desire to see Thee loved by all men as much as Thou deservest to be loved. I desire to love Thee as much as the angels love Thee in heaven, and as much as Thou wishest me to love Thee. I offer all I am and have to Thy love and glory for time and eternity; and I ask Thee, O my God! to help me to love Thee. I ask Thee to take away from my heart the love of myself and the love of the world, and to fill my soul with Thy pure and holy love, that I may seek nothing but Thy love and glory and my own salvation." Secondly, acts of love may be made by resigning ourselves in all things to the divine will, saying: "Lord, make known to me what is pleasing to Thee; I am ready to do it, whatever it may be." Thirdly, by offering ourselves to God without reserve, saying: "O my God! do what Thou pleasest with me, and with all that belongs to me." Such offerings of ourselves to God are acts of love, very pleasing in his eyes; hence, St. Teresa used to offer herself to him fifty times in the day. To rejoice in the infinite happiness of God

is also a most perfect act of love. In begging the grace of God's love we ought to ask the gift of perfect resignation and conformity to the divine will in all things, particularly in all crosses and afflictions.

CHAPTER VI.

Preparation for Mass.

The most sacred and most powerful prayer which the priest can offer to God is certainly the holy Mass; for the holy Mass is not only a prayer but also a sacrifice. "He who has not a correct idea of the holy sacrifice of the Mass," says St. Alphonsus, "shall never be able to celebrate Mass in the right manner and spirit."

The holy Sacrifice of the Mass is one of those works greater than which the omnipotence of God cannot produce. St. Thomas Aquinas asks whether God could make works still greater than those already created, and he answers, yes. He can, except three—*the Incarnation of the Son of God, the maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the everlasting beatitude of the saints in heaven.* In other words, God can create numberless worlds, all different one from the other in beauty, but He cannot make anything greater than the Incarnation of Christ, the maternity of the Blessed Virgin, and the happiness of the blessed in heaven. But why can he not? Because God himself is concerned in, and most intimately united to each of these works, and is their object. "*Hæc tria Deum involvunt et pro objecto habent,*" says St. Thomas.

Now, as there is nothing greater than God, so there cannot be a work greater than any of these, with which his divinity is so intimately united. As there can be no greater happiness than the beatific vision and enjoyment

and possession of God in heaven, where the soul is as it were transformed into God, and most inseparably united to his nature, and as there can be no mother made more perfect than the Mother of God, so also there can be no man more perfect than Christ, because he is the Man-God. These three works are, in a certain sense, of infinite dignity on account of being so intimately united to God, the infinite Good.

But in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass it is the Son of God incarnate, Jesus Christ himself, who is at once our High Priest and Victim. And thus, in order to form an adequate idea of the dignity and sanctity of the Mass, it would be necessary for us to be able to form an adequate idea of the Victim that is there offered, of the sanctity of the High Priest who offers it, and to measure the depth and the height of the mysteries of our Lord's Life, Passion, and Death, which are here represented, continued, and renewed. But this is simply an impossibility. In order to compass the idea of the dignity and sanctity of Jesus Christ, our High Priest and Victim at Mass, it would be necessary to comprehend the greatness of his Godhead. But what mind of man or angel can conceive the greatness of the divinity of Jesus Christ, which is indeed infinite? To say that his Godhead is greater than the heavens, than all kings, all saints, all angels, is to fall infinitely below it. Jesus Christ, as God, is greatness itself, and the sum of our conception of greatness is but the smallest atom of the greatness of his Godhead. David, contemplating the divine greatness, and, seeing that he could not and never would be able to comprehend it, could only exclaim, "O Lord, who is like unto Thee!" (Ps. xxxiv, 10.) O Lord, what greatness shall ever be

found like to thine? And how in truth could David understand it, since his understanding was finite and the greatness of Jesus is infinite? "Great is the Lord, and of his greatness there is no end." (Ps. cxliv, 3.) To form some idea of God's greatness, let us remember that although this world of ours is only one of a vast system of planets, yet it is twenty-seven thousand miles in circumference, and it would take two years and a half to traverse it completely at the rate of thirty miles a day.

The sun being nearly three millions of miles in circumference, could not be traversed at the same rate of speed in less than two hundred and seventy-four years; yet this sun, so immeasurably greater than our universe, is supposed to be immeasurably less than several of the fixed stars. Let us reflect again that the sun is distant from us at least ninety-five millions of miles. It is impossible to conceive in the mind so vast a space. Yet there are planets twenty times farther removed from us than the sun, and even their distance is nothing, humanly speaking, in comparison with that of the fixed stars. The light of some of those stars, according to the opinion of astronomers, has not yet reached us, although it has been travelling towards us at the rate of twelve millions of miles a minute since the creation of the world. And each of those stars is the centre of a planetary system vastly greater than our own.

Now, what are those millions of worlds that bewilder calculation or even conception when compared with God, their wonderful Maker! "Do I not fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord." (Jerem. xxiii, 24.) Thus, all of us, according to our mode of understanding, are nothing but so many miserable atoms existing in this immense ocean of

the essence of the Godhead. "In Him we live, move, and be." (Acts, xvii, 28.)

All men, all the monarchs of the earth, and even all the saints and angels of heaven, confronted with the infinite greatness of Jesus Christ, are like or even smaller than a grain of sand in comparison with the earth. "Behold," says the prophet Isaias, "the Gentiles are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the smallest grain of a balance; behold, the islands are as little dust. All nations are before Him as if they had no being at all." (Isaias, xl, 15, 17.)

It is an utter impossibility for any human or angelic understanding to conceive an adequate idea of the Mass. All we can say is that its dignity and sanctity are infinite. Indeed, in this sacrifice there is nothing to be seen but the Infinite; the Priest is God, and the Victim is God. For this reason, "All the good works together," as the saintly Curé of Ars says, "are not of equal value with the Sacrifice of the Mass, because they are the works of men, and the holy Mass is the work of God. Martyrdom is nothing in comparison; it is the sacrifice that man makes of his life to God; but the holy Mass is the sacrifice that God makes of his Body and Blood for man." So sublime is this sacrifice that in order to establish it, our Lord Jesus Christ had to die. To redeem the world it was not necessary that he should die. A single drop of his sacred Blood, a single tear, a single prayer of his would have sufficed for that purpose; but to leave to his holy religion a fitting sacrifice, a victim pure, undefiled, worthy of God, he had to die, as in the whole Universe not any victim nor High Priest could be found of equal worth with himself.

"Jesus Christ, therefore," says St. Alphonsus, "performed no action on earth greater than the celebration of Mass."

Mass is, then, of all actions, the most holy and divine. "Necessario fatemur," says the Council of Trent, "nullum aliud opus adeo sanctum ac divinum a Christi fidelibus tractari posse quam hoc tremendum mysterium." (Sess. 22.) It is, then, as we have seen, an action the most holy and dear to God, an action which appeases most efficaciously the anger of God against sinners, an action which beats down most effectually the powers of hell, an action which brings to men on earth the greatest benefits, spiritual and temporal, and which affords to the souls in Purgatory the greatest relief; it is, in fine, an action on which the salvation of the world depends.

Most justly, then, does the holy Church require her priests to celebrate Mass with the greatest possible devotion and purity of conscience. (Council of Trent, Sess. 22.) And in the same place the Council justly remarks that on those priests who celebrate this great sacrifice negligently, shall fall the malediction threatened by the prophet Jeremiah: "Maledictus homo qui facit opus Dei negligenter." (xlviii, 10.)

In order to avoid this malediction, let us see what the priest must do, before Mass, during Mass, and after Mass:

1. Before Mass, preparation is necessary.

2. During Mass reverence and devotion and offering of one's self to God are necessary.

3. After Mass, thanksgiving is necessary.

1. In the first place, the priest must make his preparation before Mass. In order to gather the wonderful

fruits of the Mass, we must celebrate it in the right spirit, and with proper dispositions. To be able to do this we must prepare ourselves for so solemn an act. Every grand and solemn action in human life is preceded by a suitable preparation. We all have, at some time, witnessed the public reception of some great man whom the people wish to honor—some distinguished warrior, or successful candidate, or great orator. What a crowd in the streets! What anxiety to secure a place for seeing! What a cry and tumult on all sides! And when the hero of the day arrives, what eagerness to get a sight of him! How dense the crowd becomes behind him! How happy they on whom he smiles, or to whom he speaks! How greatly envied is the favored citizen with whom he will take up his abode! What hurry, and bustle and excitement in the house where he is to lodge! Now, for whom is all this? For a man—a poor, weak mortal man. And I, alas! shall, with unconcern, without due preparation, celebrate the most sublime mysteries of our holy religion!

"Sicut tu Deo apparueris," says St. Bernard, "ita tibi Deus apparebit." God will exhibit himself to us as we show ourselves to him.

If there are so few saintly priests, says Cardinal Bona, "defectus non in cibo est, sed in edentis dispositione." (De Sacrif. Minæ, c. 6, § 6.) "One single Mass is sufficient to sanctify the priest," says St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi. The reason why all priests do not become saints is because they celebrate with so little preparation."

Now, preparation for Mass is twofold: *remote* and *proximate*. The remote preparation consists in the pure and virtuous life which every priest must lead in order to celebrate worthily. If God required purity in the priests

of the Old Law, because they had to carry the sacred vessels, (mundamini qui fertis vasa Domini, Isai. lii. 11.) how much greater should be the purity and sanctity of the priest who has to carry in his hands and in his body the Incarnate Word. Hence, should a priest know himself to be in a state of utter unworthiness to say Mass, the Church obliges him, under pain of mortal sin, to go to confession previously to the celebration of the holy Sacrifice, for "Thou dost not dare," says St. John Chrysostom, "to touch with unwashed hands the sacred Sacrifice, however great the necessity that urges thee; approach not, therefore, with an unwashed soul."

"But to be pure and holy," says St. Alphonsus, "it is not enough for the priest to be free from mortal sin; he must also be free from venial sins which are fully deliberate, otherwise he shall have no part with Christ. "Nemo," says St. Bernard, "quæ videntur modica, contemnat; quoniam sicut audivit Petrus, nisi laverit ea Christus, non habebimus partem cum eo."

"He who is to act as priest," says St. Chrysostom, "must needs be as pure as though he stood in heaven itself, in the midst of those heavenly powers."

"Hence all the actions and words of the priest," says St. Alphonsus, "must be holy and serve to prepare him for the worthy celebration of the sacred mysteries."

The *proximate* or immediate preparation consists, first, in mental prayer. "How can the priest," says St. Alphonsus, "celebrate Mass with devotion unless he has first made mental prayer?" Father M. Avila used to say that a priest should make mental prayer for an hour, or, at least half an hour before Mass. "I," says St. Alphonsus, "would require of some to make mental prayer

for half an hour, and of others at least a quarter of an hour, though a quarter of an hour is too little."

In the Old Law the fire on the altar was never suffered to die out. In like manner, the fire of divine love must burn unceasingly in the heart of the priest. Now the fuel which keeps alive this divine fire is *meditation.*

Meditation banishes from the heart every unbecoming and worldly thought, and fixes the attention of the priest on the great act he is about to perform. Before Mass the priest should meditate especially on the sufferings and death of Jesus. "Quotiescunque manducabitis panem hunc," says the Apostle, "et calicem bibetis, mortem Domini annuntiabitis donec veniat." (I. Cor. xi, 26.)

Theologians teach that, before Mass, the priest is *obliged* to meditate on our Lord's passion, according to the words of Jesus himself: "Hoc facite in meam commemorationem." (Luke, xxii, 19.)

Even though the priest has made his meditation before Mass, he should, moreover, before he begins Mass, always recollect himself at least for a short time and consider what he is going to do. In entering the sacristy to say Mass, he should take leave of all worldly thoughts, and think only of the great action which he is going to perform and of the heavenly bread which he is going to eat at the divine table. "When I turn to the altar to begin Mass," says St. Francis de Sales in a letter to St. Frances de Chantal, "I lose sight of everything on this earth." Let the priest consider that he is going to call from heaven to earth, the Incarnate Word, to treat with him familiarly, to offer him again to the eternal Father, and to partake of his sacred Flesh.

In the Old Law the priest was permitted to enter the Holy of Holies only once a year; but now every priest is allowed to immolate every day the Lamb of God, in order to obtain the divine grace for himself as well as for the people.

"The priest in going to celebrate," says St. Bonaventure, "should propose to himself three ends: to honor God, to commemorate the Passion of Jesus Christ and to obtain graces for the whole Church." (De Præp. ad Miss. c. 9.)

A certain pastor announced to his people one Sunday: "There will be no Mass during this week, as no one has brought any money for Masses." Did that priest always celebrate to honor God and to otain grace, or was it merely for money?

CHAPTER VII.

On Reverence and Devotion in Celebrating Mass.

Secondly, "it is necessary," says St. Alphonsus, "to celebrate Mass with reverence and devotion. It is well known that the maniple was introduced for the purpose of wiping away the tears of devotion which flowed from the eyes of the priest; for in former times priests wept continually during the celebration of Mass. It has been already said that a priest on the altar represents the very person of Jesus Christ. 'Sacerdos vice Christi vere fungitur,' says St. Cyprian, epist. 63, ad Cecil. There he says in the person of Jesus Christ, *hoc est corpus meum: hic est calix sanguinis mei.* But, O God! it would be necessary to weep, and even to shed tears of blood, at the manner in which many priests celebrate Mass. It excites compassion to see the contempt with which some priests and religious, and even priests of the reformed Orders, treat Jesus Christ on the altar. Observe with what kind of attention certain priests celebrate Mass. I hope their number is small. Of them we may well say what Clement of Alexandria said of the pagan priests, that they turned heaven into a stage, and God into the subject of the comedy: 'O impietatem! scenam cœlum fecistis, et Deus factus est actus.'—De sacr. Gentil. But why do I say a comedy? Oh! how great would be their attention if they had to recite a part in a comedy? But with what sort of attention do they celebrate Mass? Mu-

tilated words; genuflexions which appear to be acts of contempt, rather than of reverence; benedictions which I know not what to call. They move and turn at the altar in a disrespectful manner; they confound the words with the ceremonies which they perform before the time prescribed by the rubrics; although these rubrics are, according to the true opinion, all preceptive. For, St. Pius V, in the Bull inserted in the Missal, commands us (districte in virtute sanctæ obedientiæ,) to celebrate Mass according to the rubrics of the Missal: 'Juxta ritum, modum et norman in missali præscriptam.' Hence he who violates the rubrics, cannot be excused from sin, and he who is guilty of a grievous neglect of them, cannot be excused from mortal sin. All arises from an anxiety to have the Mass soon finished. Some say Mass with as much haste as if the walls were about to fall, or as if they expected to be attacked by pirates without getting time to fly away. Some priests spend two hours in useless conversation, or in treating of worldly affairs, and are all haste in celebrating Mass. As they begin the Mass without reverence, so they proceed to consecrate, to take Jesus Christ in their hands, and to communicate with as much irreverence as if the holy sacrament were common bread. They should be told what Father M. Avila said one day to a priest who celebrated with haste and irreverence: 'For God's sake treat him better, for he is the Son of a good Father.' The Lord commanded the priests of the Old Law to tremble through reverence in approaching his sanctuary: 'Pavete ad sanctuarium meum.' (Lev. xxvi, 2.) And still we see scandalous irreverence in priests of the New Law while they stand at the altar in the presence of Jesus Christ; while they converse with

him, take him in their hands, offer him in sacrifice, and eat his flesh. In the Old Law, the Lord threatened several maledictions against priests who neglected the ceremonies of sacrifices, which were but figures of our sacrifice. 'But if thou wilt not hear the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep.....all his ceremonies.....all these curses shall come upon thee.....cursed shalt thou be in the city, cursed in the field.' (Deut. xxviii, 15, 16.) St. Teresa used to say: I would give my life for a ceremony of the Church. And will a priest despise the ceremonies of the holy Mass. Suarez teaches that the omission of any ceremony prescribed in the Mass, cannot be excused from sin; and it is the opinion of many theologians, that a notable neglect of the ceremonies may be a mortal sin.

"In my Moral Theology, (lib. 6, n. 400, q. 2.) I have shown by the authority of many theologians, that to celebrate Mass in less than a quarter of an hour, cannot be excused from grievous sin. This doctrine rests on two reasons: first, the irreverence which in so short a Mass is offered to the holy sacrifice; secondly, the scandal which is given to the people. As to the reverence due to the sacrifice, the Council of Trent commands priests to celebrate Mass with the greatest possible devotion: 'Omnem operam ponendam esse ut quanta maxima fieri potest exterioris devotionis ac pietatis specie peragatur.' (Sess. 22, decr. de observ., &c.) The Council adds, that to neglect even this external devotion due to the sacrifice, is a species of impiety: 'Irreverentia, quæ ab impietate vix sejuncta esse potest.'

"As reverence consists in the proper performance of the ceremonies, so, in like manner, irreverence consists in the bad performance of the ceremonies, and if this ir-

reverence is a grievous one, it is a mortal sin. And to perform the ceremonies with the reverence do to so great a sacrifice, it is not enough to go through them; for some who are very quick in their articulations and motions, may be able to perform the ceremonies in less than a quarter of an hour, but it is necessary to perform them with becoming gravity, which belongs intrinsically to the reverence due to the Mass.

To celebrate Mass in so short a time, is also a grievous sin on account of the scandal given to the people who are present. And here it is necessary to consider what the same Council of Trent says in another place, that the ceremonies have been instituted by the Church in order to excite in the faithful the veneration and esteem due to so great a sacrifice, and to the most sublime mysteries which it contains. "Ecclesia," says the holy Council, "cæremonias adhibuit ut majestas tanti sacrificii commendaretur, et mentes fidelium per hæc visibilia religionis signa ad rerum altissimarum, quæ in hoc sacrificio latent, contemplationem excitarentur." (Sess. 22, c. 5, de ref.) But instead of inspiring reverence, these ceremonies, when performed with great haste, diminish and destroy the veneration of the people for so holy a mystery. Peter de Blois says that the irreverence with which Mass is celebrated, makes people think little of the most holy sacrament: 'Ex inordinatis et indisciplinatis sacerdotibus hodie datur ostentui nostræ redemptionis venerabile sacramentum.' —Ep. ad Richer. This scandal cannot be excused from mortal sin. Hence in the year 1583, the Council of Tours ordained that priests should be well instructed in the ceremonies of the Mass: 'Ne populum sibi commissum a devotione potius revocent quam ad sacrorum mysteriorum venerationem invitent.'

"How can priests expect by Masses said with such irreverence to obtain graces from God, when during the oblation of these Masses they offend and dishonor him more than they honor him? Should a priest not believe in the most holy sacrament of the altar, he would offend God, but it is a still greater offence to believe in it, and to celebrate Mass without due reverence, and thus make the people who are present lose their veneration for the holy sacrament. In the beginning the Jews respected Jesus Christ, but when they saw him despised by their priests, they lost their esteem for him, and in the end joined in the cry of the priests: "Tolle, tolle, crucifige eum." And in like manner, seculars seeing a priest treat the Mass with such irreverence, lose their respect and veneration for it. A Mass said with reverence excites devotion in all who attend it; but, on the other hand, a Mass celebrated with irreverence, destroys devotion and even faith in those who are present. A religious of high reputation told me that a certain heretic was resolved to renounce his errors, but having been afterwards present at a Mass said without reverence, he went to the bishop and said that he no longer intended to abjure his heresy, because he felt convinced that priests who celebrated Mass in such a manner, did not sincerely believe in the truth of the Catholic Church; and added, 'If I were pope and knew that a priest said Mass with irreverence, I would command him to be burned alive.' After these words he withdrew, resolved to continue in his heresy.

But some priests say that seculars complain when the Mass is long. Then I ask shall the want of devotion in seculars be the rule for the respect due to the Mass? Besides, if all priests said Mass with becoming reverence and grav-

ity, seculars would feel the veneration due to so great a sacrifice, and would not complain of being obliged to spend half an hour in Mass. But because Masses are frequently so short, and so little calculated to excite devotion, seculars, after the example of priests, hear Mass with indevotion and with little faith; and when they find that it lasts longer than half an hour, they, on account of the bad habit which they have contracted, grow weary and begin to complain; and though they spend without tediousness several hours at play, or in the street, to pass the time, they feel it tedious and fatiguing to spend half an hour in hearing Mass. Of this evil, priests are the cause. 'To you, O priests, that despise my name, and have said: wherein have we despised thy name?..... In that you say: the table of the Lord is contemptible.' (Malach. i, 6, 7.) The want of reverence with which many priests celebrate Mass, is the cause why it is treated with contempt by others.

"Poor priests! Having heard that a priest died after celebrating his first Mass, the venerable Father M. Avila said: Oh! what a terrible account shall he have to render to God for his first Mass? But what should Father Avila say of priests who have for thirty or forty years said Mass with haste and irreverence, so as to scandalize all who were present at it? And how, I ask again, can such priests propitiate the Lord and obtain his graces, when by celebrating in such a manner, they insult rather than honor him? 'Cum omne crimen,' said Pope Julius, 'sacrificiis deleatur, quid pro delictorum expiatione, Domino dabitur, quando in ipsa sacrificii oblatione erratur?'—C. 1, cum omne crimen, de consecr., dist. 2. Miserable priests! and miserable the bishop who permits

such priests to celebrate. For, as the Council of Trent prescribes, bishops are bound to prevent all irreverences in the celebration of Mass: 'Decernit sancta synodus, ut ordinarii locorum ea omnia prohibere sedulo curent ac teneantur quæ irreverentia (quæ ab impietate vix sejuncta esse potest) induxit.' (Sess. 22, dec. de observ., &c.) Mark the words, *prohibere curent ac teneantur;* they are bound to suspend the priest who celebrates without due reverence. And this they are obliged to do even with regard to regulars; for in this every bishop is constituted a delegate of the Apostolic See, and is therefore bound to seek for information regarding the manner in which Mass is celebrated in his diocese.

"And let us, dearly beloved priests, endeavor to amend, if we have hitherto offered this great sacrifice with a want of reverence and devotion. Let us, at least from this day forward, repair the evil we have done. Let us, in preparing for Mass, reflect on the nature of the action we are going to perform: in celebrating Mass we perform an action the most sublime and holy that man can perform. Ah! what blessings does a Mass, said with devotion, bring on him who offers it, and on those who hear it. With regard to the priest who offers it, the *disciple* writes: 'Oratio citius auditur in ecclesia in præsentia celebrantis.' (Serm. 48.) Now, if God hears, more speedily, the prayers which a secular offers in the presence of a priest celebrating Mass, how much more readily will he hear the prayers of the priest himself, if he celebrates with devotion! He who offers the holy Mass every day with devotion, will always receive new lights and new strength from God. Jesus Christ will always infuse increased knowledge and consolation; he will encourage

him, and grant him the graces which he desires. A priest may feel assured, particularly after the consecration, that he will receive from Jesus Christ all the graces he asks. The venerable Father D. Anthony de Colellis, of the congregation of the *Pii Operarii*, used to say : 'When I celebrate and hold Jesus Christ in my hands, I obtain whatsoever I wish for.' With regard to him who celebrates, and to those who hear Mass, it is related, in the life of St. Peter of Alcantara, that the Mass which he so devoutly celebrated, produced more fruit than all the sermons preached in the province in which he lived." (Selva, Part II, Instruction 1.)

A great sinner went one day to a certain Church, in order to make his confession. There were several priests saying Mass as he entered. One of them celebrated the holy sacrifice with such devotion that the sinner said to himself : " That is the priest for me. I'll go to confession to him."

We read in the lives of holy priests that they were so careful to prepare themselves in the best manner possible for the celebration of the tremendous sacrifice of the Mass, and on that account were often visited with most extraordinary favors during the oblation of the sacred mysteries. St. Leonard of Port Maurice said Mass every day. He prepared himself for this Sacrifice by confessing twice in the day. He never approached the altar without being girt with hair-cloth, and having first offered thirty-three times to the Eternal Father the most sacred Blood of Jesus Christ, praying him to grant, by virtue of his sacrifice, that his heart might be always pure and clean, free from every stain of sin. In going to the altar, he pictured to his mind the awful scene of Cal-

vary, and saw with the eye of faith the Holy Trinity, surrounded by angels and saints, ready to receive the sacrifice he was about to offer. His deportment was that of a man raised above the world, recollected and absorbed in contemplating his God. If sometimes he was told that he was a long time in celebrating Mass, he used to reply: "Do you not know that my greatest consolation is to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice, and my great sorrow is to see some priests celebrate it with so much haste. If all had a lively faith, they would be unwilling to leave the altar." In fact, so strong was his faith, that he found his greatest delight in offering the divine Son to the Eternal Father, especially in the consecration, when he appeared quite inflamed with love and joy, and during the whole time of Mass he seemed in an ecstasy. (His Life.)

The great and famous Archbishop of Cologne, St. Herbert, was touched with such devotion in saying Mass, that his face, which bore habitually marks of the virtues with which his holy soul was adorned, became then so luminous and resplendent, that he seemed an angel rather than a man.

What were the transports and sentiments of St. Lawrence Justinian? His body became, as it were, immovable, and had only sufficient motion to serve his soul, which was totally taken up with this most sublime action; his face shone with angelic modesty, his eyes distilled tears, and his mind was transported by the force of his ravishments.

John of Alvernia, whilst one day saying Mass, was so wrapt in a divine and ineffable sense of God, that he was hardly able to proceed. After he had pronounced the words of consecration, he became, as it were, unconscious

of himself, being wholly lost in the divinity of the mysteries which he was performing.

The Abbot Euthymius used to tell in private conversation that often, while saying Mass, he saw troops of angels who stood around.

We read of St. Thomas Aquinas that, in saying Mass, he seemed to be in raptures, often quite dissolved in tears, and melting with love in contemplation of the immense charity of Jesus Christ.

Severus relates that while St. Martin was saying Mass, a fiery globe used to appear above his head.

St. Euthenius used to see a great fire and light coming down from heaven, and enveloping him and his assistant to the end of the holy Sacrifice. (His Life by H. Cyrillus.) In the same manner the Holy Ghost came upon St. Anastasius, and surrounded him in the form of a fiery flame whilst celebrating the sacred Mysteries. (His Life by St. Basil.)

Can we wonder, if the holy sacrifice of the Mass has ever been and still is the delight and happiness of every good priest. "Where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also." (Matt. vi, 21.)

CHAPTER VIII.

Thanksgiving after Mass.

There was a beautiful tradition amongst the Jews which Lancicius quotes from Philo. It was to this effect: When God had created the world, he asked the angels what they thought of this work of his hands. One of them answered that it was so vast and so perfect that only one thing was wanting to it, namely, that there should be created a clear, mighty, and harmonious voice, which should fill all the quarters of the world incessantly with its sweet sound, and offer thanksgiving day and night to its Maker for his incomparable blessings.

Indeed, the blessings of God, both spiritual and temporal, are so great and so numerous that every one of us must say with St. Gregory of Nyssa: "I think that if our whole life long we conversed with God without distraction, and did nothing but give thanks, we should really be just as far from adequately thanking our heavenly benefactor, as if we had never thought of thanking him at all. For time has three parts, the past, the present, and the future. If you consider the present, it is by God that you are now living; if the future, he is the hope of everything you expect; if the past, you would never have been if he had not created you. That you were born, was his blessing. And after you were born, your life and your death were equally his blessing. Whatever your future hopes may be, they depend also

on his blessing. You are only master of the present; and therefore if you never once intermitted thanksgiving during your whole life, you would hardly do enough for the grace that is always present; and your imagination cannot conceive of any method possible by which you could do anything for the time past, or for the time to come." Since the benefits and blessings of God are unspeakably great, from their multitude, their magnitude, and their incomprehensibility, they are by no means to be concealed in silence or left without commemoration. Though it be impossible for us to commemorate them adequately, yet we must openly acknowledge them, revere them in our heart, and religiously worship them as far as possible. For though we cannot explain them in words, we can make acknowledgment of them in the pious and enlarged affection of our hearts. Indeed, the immense mercy of our Eternal Creator condescends to approve not only that which man can do, but all he would desire to do; for the merits of the just are counted up by the Most High, not only in the doing of the work, but in the desire of the will.

Hence the spirit of thanksgiving has been in all ages the characteristic of the saints. Thanksgiving has always been their favorite prayer.

When the Archangel Raphael was about to make himself known to Tobias and his family, he said to them: "It is time that I return to him that sent me: but bless God and publish all his wonderful works." Probably, as he parted from them, he showed them a glimpse of his angelic beauty, as they went immediately into an ecstasy of three hours, which filled them with a spirit of thanksgiving. "Then they, lying prostrate for three hours

upon their face, blessed God, and rising up they told all his wonderful works."

The Christians learned this spirit from our Lord Jesus Christ, who always thanked his Father in the beginning of his prayers, and when about to operate any miracle.

From the epistles of St. Paul we learn that this great Apostle constantly exhorted the Christians, "always to give thanks for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God and the Father."

The ancient Christians saluted one another with these words: "Thanks be to God." Those very words were always in the mouth and heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary. And in heaven, as St. John assures us, the blessed prostrate themselves before the throne of God to thank him continually for all his benefits. St. Cyprian, on hearing the sentence of his death, said: "Thanks be to God," and gave twenty-five gold crowns to the man who was to cut off his head. St. Lawrence thanked God on his gridiron. St. Boniface, in the midst of horrible torments, exclaimed: "Jesus Christ, Son of God, I thank Thee." St. Dulas, while he was being cruelly scourged, repeated: "I thank Thee, my Lord Jesus, for having deemed me worthy to suffer this for love of Thee." There is nothing more holy than a tongue which thanks God in adversity. To say but once "Thanks be to God" in adversity or illness, is better than to say it several thousand times in prosperity. Father Didacus Martinez, the Jesuit who was called the Apostle of Peru, because of his zeal for souls and his indefatigable labors in that province, used to say daily four hundred times and often six hundred times, "*Deo gratias*," "Thanks be to God." He tried to induce others to practise the same devotion,

and declared that he knew there was no short prayer more acceptable to God than this, provided it was uttered with a devout intention. Hence, St. Lawrence Justinian says: "Only let God see you are thankful for what he has given you, and he will bestow more and better gifts upon you." St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi received a revelation in which she was told that thanksgiving prepared the soul for the boundless liberality of the Eternal Word.

In one of the revelations of St. Catharine of Sienna, God the Father tells her that thanksgiving makes the soul incessantly delight in him, that it frees men from negligence and lukewarmness altogether, and makes them anxious to please him more and more in all things. "Happy is he," says St. Bernard, "who at every grace he receives, returns in thought to him in whom is the fulness of all grace; for if we show ourselves grateful for what he has given us, we may make room for still further grace in ourselves. Speak to God in thanksgiving, and you will receive grace more abundantly."

Now this duty of thanksgiving seems to be forgotten by most men, even by many a priest. It would not be easy to exaggerate the common neglect of this duty. There is little enough of prayer; but there is still less of thanksgiving. For every million of *Paters* and *Aves*, which rise up from the earth to avert evils, or to ask graces, how many follow after in thanksgiving for the evils averted or the graces given?

Men are grateful to their fellow-men, grateful even to animals. But to be thankful towards God, their greatest benefactor, seems unaccountably to have fallen out of most men's practical religion altogether. If we have rea-

son to pity God, if we may dare so to speak with St. Alphonsus, because men sin against his loving Majesty, still more reason have we to do so when we see how scanty and how cold are the thanksgivings offered up to him.

"This sin of ingratitude," says St. Bernard, "is an enemy of the soul that entertains it in every way, depriving it of the good it has acquired, and preventing the acquisition of more; it is a scorching wind that dries up the sources of piety, the streams of mercy, and the torrents of grace. I have an extreme hatred of ingratitude, because it is a murderer which directly attacks the soul's salvation, and in my opinion there is nothing in religious, and in persons who practise piety, so displeasing to God as ingratitude for his benefits. Why is it that often God does not grant what we ask of him with the greatest earnestness? Is his power weakened? Are his riches exhausted? Has his affection for us waned? Alas, no! The true cause is that we do not thank God for his benefits. There are few who thank him as they ought for his favors."

Indeed, there is nothing more odious even among men than ingratitude. "The ungrateful man," says St. Irenæus, "is a vessel of ignominy into which God pours the gall of his anger; while the grateful man is a vessel of election and honor, into which he continually pours the precious waters of his grace, and makes of him a great instrument of his glory."

Now, which of all men is under the greatest obligation to be thankful to Almighty God? Is it not the priest?

And when is it that the priest should especially give thanks to God? Is it not immediately after Mass?

When Judas had received holy Communion, he made no thanksgiving. He went out instantly and sold our Lord. Who wishes to resemble that wicked traitor? Indeed, a good thanksgiving after Mass is even of greater importance than a good preparation for it. St. Chrysostom says that when a person has eaten some delicious food at a banquet, he is careful not to take anything bitter in his mouth immediately after, lest he should lose the sweet flavor of those delicate viands. In like manner, when we have received the precious body of Jesus Christ, we should take care not to lose its heavenly flavor by turning too soon to the cares and business of the world.

St. Francis de Sales expresses the same idea. "When the merchants of India," he says, "have brought home their precious porcelain, they are very careful in conveying it to their storehouses, lest they should stumble and break their costly wares. In like manner, should the priest, when he carries the priceless treasure of our Lord's body, walk with great care and circumspection, in order not to lose the costly gift committed to his keeping. The meaning of both saints is, that after Mass we should spend some time in devout recollection and prayer. This is the general practice of good priests. And, indeed, reason itself tells us, that a good thanksgiving after Mass is even of more importance than a good preparation for it.

If we are obliged to prepare for Mass, what should be our devotion when our Lord is actually in our hearts? When the Blessed Virgin Mary visited St. Elizabeth, the aged saint was so astonished at the condescension of the glorious Mother of God, that she cried out: "Whence is this to me, that the Mother of my God should come to

me ?" Now, in holy Mass, it is the Lord himself that comes to us; the eternal "Wisdom which proceeded from the mouth of the Most High"; the "Lord and Prince of the house of Israel, who appeared to Moses in the burning bush;" the "King of nations"; "Emmanuel," "our King and Law-giver." To remain indifferent, after having received the Blessed Eucharist, is to evince either a total want of faith or a levity and stupidity unworthy of a reasonable being. What a spectacle for the angels, to see a creature approach that sacred host before which they bow in lowliest adoration, and, after having had the unutterable happiness of receiving the Redeemer, to leave the church with as much unconcern as if he had partaken of ordinary bread! Were an ignorant peasant guilty of such a fault he might be pardoned. But, O God! what a sight for the angels to behold a priest, with Jesus in his heart, with lips yet bedewed with the sacred blood of Christ, going forth from the altar and acting and talking and jesting just as if he had but tasted ordinary food utterly unmindful of the inestimable favor he has received. Such a priest should be addressed in the words which St. Bernard addressed to the archdeacon Fulcone: "Alas! how is it that you are so soon tired of Christ, of whom it is written, 'Honey and milk are beneath his tongue?' I wonder that you loathe this most sweet food, if indeed you have ever tasted how sweet the Lord is. But, undoubtedly you have not as yet tasted the sweetness of the Lord, and therefore you know not how sweet he is. This is the reason why you have no relish for the food you have never tasted, or if you have tasted it, and have not experienced its sweetness, your palate must be greatly vitiated; for the Lord

himself says: 'Whosoever eateth me, shall still hunger, and whosoever drinketh me shall still thirst.'" Such an ungrateful priest should be treated in the manner in which Father Avila once acted towards a priest who left the Church immediately after Mass. He sent two ecclesiastics with lighted torches to accompany him. When asked by the priest why they followed him, they answered: "We accompany the Lord of heaven and earth, whom you carry in your breast."

If all those who follow the example of this indevout priest, received the same reproof, the scandal of leaving the church immediately after Mass would soon cease. Although the Majesty of our Lord should induce us not to leave him alone in our hearts after Mass, yet it is not the argument which he himself employs. There is in this sacrament nothing that breathes of majesty. Our Lord is silent, whether we leave the church immediately or kneel and reverently converse with him. The stones do not cry out against our ingratitude, if, after eating the bread of angels, we neglect to give thanks to God. Jesus Christ might send twelve legions of angels to stand around us after we have left the altar, to remind us that he is present in our hearts; but he prefers not to do this. Now it is from this very fact of *not* surrounding himself with anything calculated to fear, that we ought to draw the most powerful incentive to gratitude and love.

This sacrament is the sacrament of love. In it God is pleased to treat with his creatures in all familiarity. Jesus Christ, having accomplished the work of our Redemption, draws nigh to converse with us, as he did to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus. He wishes to speak to us as a friend to a friend. What an affront,

then, to leave him the moment he comes to us! Would you not consider it the greatest rudeness, if, after having travelled far to see a friend, he were to go off and leave you all alone, scarcely deigning to say even a word to you? Suppose a dear friend should visit you, would you not give him a cordial welcome and prepare the best room in your house, and adorn it with the richest furniture? Would you not sacrifice your time to keep him company, and give him some tokens of love before allowing him to depart? Now, should you not do at least as much for Jesus Christ, who has come so far to visit you; who has suffered so much for your sake; who is always thinking of you, and has given you so many proofs of his love? This is the motive that Jesus Christ himself prefers to place before us, in order to incite us to make a due thanksgiving after Mass and it is one that must have irresistible weight with every honest heart.

We will now consider the manner in which we ought to make our thanksgiving. Every one, of course, is free to use such prayers as he shall find most suited to his devotion. A good thanksgiving consists, first, in uniting ourselves intimately with our Lord by offering ourselves entirely to him. The moment of Communion is the most precious moment of our lives. Then we can truly exclaim: "My God, and my All!" When we communicate, God himself is present in our hearts as our friend and bridegroom. Nothing can be more intimate than the union which then takes place between the Creator and his creature. It is more like the Incarnation of the eternal Son of God in the womb of the Virgin Mary than anything else. To her it was said, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High

shall overshadow thee. And therefore also, the Holy One which is to be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." Now the same Son of God, the Holy One, that was born of the spotless Virgin, comes into our hearts in the sacred host. Think of all that is most beautiful and most precious in the world; think of all the riches of the universe, all the glory of heaven, and you have as yet but a faint idea of the priceless treasure which you receive in holy communion. You possess not only earth and heaven, but the Lord and Maker of heaven and earth. Communion is a mystery which almost baffles thought. Certainly God can never cease to be what he is; he can never cease to be awful in his greatness, and infinite in his wisdom; our Ruler, our King, and our Judge; but in this sacrament, as if he had nothing to think of but the soul which he comes to visit, he lavishes upon her all the riches of his bounty, and reveals himself to her in the most amiable and most *humble* manner. Perhaps it is for this reason that he has been pleased so often to manifest himself as an *Infant* in the sacred host, in order to show us how small he has become for love of us, and to take away from us all fear. Of old it was said, Magnus Dominus et laudabilis nimis. "Great is the Lord and exceedingly to be praised;" but now we may say rather, Parvus Dominus et amabilis nimis. "Small is the Lord and exceedingly to be loved." Accordingly we find from the expressions of the saints, that the thought which possessed their souls after Communion was admiration at the unutterable love of God.

St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi once asked a pious person after Communion, of what she was thinking. "Of love," was her reply. "Yes," rejoined the saint,

" when we think of the immense love of Jesus Christ for us, we cannot think of anything else."

He who has received holy Communion can truly exclaim with the spouse in the Canticles: " I found him whom my soul loveth. I held him, and I will not let him go." (Cant. iii, 4.) Creatures, depart from me, go altogether from my heart. I loved you once, because I was blind. Now I love you not, nor can I ever love you again. I have found another good, infinitely more delightful than you. I have found in myself my Jesus, who has enamored me by his beauty. He has already accepted me, so that I am no longer my own. Creatures, farewell. I am not, nor shall I ever again be yours. I am and shall always be Christ's. He is mine, and will be always mine.

However, it is not enough to wonder at our Saviour's love. Love, to produce union, must be mutual. We must give Jesus love for love.

In childhood, my Spouse divine taught me
His name and his pure hallowed love;
His name that e'er thrills my heart strangely,
His love that is far, far above
The fond love of angel or mother,—
O, ne'er shall earth know such another!
The heart that has known them can never
Forget the pure joys of his love.

A robe white and stainless he gave me,
More costly than queens of earth wear,
And jewels far brighter than sunlight,
Than diamonds or rubies more rare;
With faith, hope and pure love he blessed me,
And then to his burning heart pressed me;—
O, fondly I'll guard and I'll cherish
His gifts and his pure love fore'er!

A food sweet and wondrous he gave me,
The food of bright angels above ;
He gave me to drink his fond Heart's blood—
O, fathomless depths of God's love!
When wounded and bowed down with sadness,
He healed me, and gave peace and gladness—
Sweet Jesu, so loving and faithful,
O, teach me to give love for love!

Ah! now is the time to repay Jesus for the trials and tears, the shame and sorrow, the contradictions and reproaches which he underwent for the ransom of our souls. Our souls were his already by the title of creation, and now they belong to him by the title of redemption. We must make to him a childlike, generous, sincere, and complete oblation. "But what," you say, "have I to offer? I am poor and needy, what can I give to the Lord of heaven and earth?" I will tell you. Imitate Æschines, a disciple of Socrates, of whom Seneca relates that, not being able, on account of his poverty, to make such rich presents to his master as his fellow-disciples did, he went to Socrates and said: "Master, my extreme poverty leaves me nothing to give you as a token of my gratitude; I offer you, then, myself, to be yours forever." "Truly," said Socrates, "you have given me more than all the rest." Act thus with Jesus Christ. You have no great treasures to offer him; you have no station to renounce for him; you have no occasion to die for him; you cannot do for him what he has done for you, but you can give him that which he values more than anything else—your heart.

There is nothing that gives so much pleasure to Jesus as a heart truly resolved to serve him. Give him, then, this pleasure; offer yourself to him, to be disposed of as

he pleases: to receive at his hand bitter and sweet, indifferently; to serve him with all the fervor that you can; to avoid sin and to lead a Christian life. Do this, and then your Communion will be really a Communion, that is to say, a union with God.

The good and the bad receive the body of Christ alike; but it is the good alone who are truly united to him. Are you, perhaps, afraid to make the promises which Jesus asks of you? "It is easy," you say, "to make an offering of ourselves to Jesus, but it is not so easy to carry it into effect." Oh, priest of the Lord, you do not yet understand the generosity of love! Did not our Lord ask St. James and St. John whether they were ready to drink of his chalice, before he actually gave them the grace of martyrdom? Did he not make us promise to renounce the devil and his works, and his pomps, and to live in obedience to his law, before he adopted us as his children in baptism? We must first promise much, and then God will help us to do much. He comes into our hearts, not only to claim them as his own, but to give us grace whereby we may make them truly his. After we have made an oblation of ourselves to him, we must immediately proceed to beg of him the grace to fulfil that which we have promised—and this is the second part of a good thanksgiving.

There is no doubt that *petitioning* our Lord for special graces should be our principal occupation after Mass. "The time after Communion," says St. Theresa, "is the best time for negotiating with Jesus Christ; for then he is in the soul, seated, as it were, on a throne of grace, and saying, as he said to the blind man: "What wilt thou that I should do to thee?" Another great servant of

God says that, in the beginning of his conversion, he was accustomed to employ the time after Communion, chiefly in making devout aspirations; but that afterwards he devoted almost the whole time to petition, which he found more profitable to his soul. When a prince goes to pay a short visit to his subjects, his whole time is taken up in hearing their complaints, in redressing their grievances, in consoling them in their miseries, and in relieving their wants. So, Jesus Christ, our heavenly King, comes in this sacrament to inquire into our wants and to relieve them. I say to inquire into our wants, not as if he needed to be informed of them, but because, as St. Alphonsus says, he wishes that we should lay them before him. When the storm was raging on the sea of Tiberias, our Lord continued to sleep in the ship, although he knew well the danger of his disciples. Why did he do this? It was because he wished that they should awaken him and implore his aid. Lay then, before Jesus all the troubles, all the weaknesses, all the fears, all the desires, all the difficulties, of yourself and of your flock.

Do you wish to subdue your passions and disorderly affections? Hear what Jesus has said: "As the division of waters, so the heart of the king is in my hands." (Prov. xxi, 1.) If the hearts of kings are like wax in his hands, is he not able to change your heart also? Is he not able to convert you as he converted the prophet David, St. Mary Magdalen, St. Paul, St. Margaret of Cortona, and a host of others? Ask him, then, to destroy in you what is bad, and to make you what you wish to be; to change your wavering purpose into a firm resolution; your fear of self-discipline into an earnest desire to advance in virtue and holiness. Ask him to

change your dissipated heart into a recollected one; your unmortified heart into a mortified one; your ambitious heart into an humble one; your faint and timid heart into a brave and courageous one; your irritable and peevish heart into a mild and patient one; your sinful heart into a holy one.

In the life of St. Catharine of Sienna, we read of a wonderful grace that she received from our Lord. He took out her heart and gave her *his* in its place. Each one of us has it in his power to receive a grace somewhat similar. Let us only ask of Jesus Christ, and he will transform us, as it were, into himself. Let us say—

A prayer for all our friends afar,—
A prayer for those who still are near;
O, shield them, Lord, from sin and woe!
Be their names e'er to memory dear!

There is another exercise of devotion which should form part of your thanksgiving after Mass. I mean *Praise.* It is good sometimes to rejoice; it enlarges the heart and gives us courage. "Rejoice in the Lord always," says St. Paul, "and again I say—Rejoice!" The life of priests would be much happier than it is were they, with a lively faith, to receive our Lord. How sorrowful soever you may be, you will not go from the altar and go away without consolation. When our divine Saviour entered the temple, the little children cried out: "Hosanna to the Son of David!" and will not you sing a song of praise when Jesus comes into the temple of your heart? O, how much you ought to rejoice! How great a thing it is to be a priest! "Where is the nation that has its gods so nigh, as our God is with us? What king or emperor is so honored as the priest? What an-

gel of heaven so favored as the good communicant? "Do you not know," says St. Paul, "that you are temples of God?" "Yea, truly, each good priest is a true Christopher, that is to say, a bearer of Christ! After Mass, he carries in his heart Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God.

"All things are yours," says St. Paul; "all are yours and you are Christ's." "Exult ye who live in Sion!" Why should you make life so hard, and complain of your crosses and trials, and be so impatient in every difficulty? Why should you envy the rich of this world, the great and the honored? Why should you fret when insulted and groan in adversity? Why should you faint at the thought of self-denial and conflict? Are you not a priest? Have you not the sweet services of the Church to soothe you and her sacraments to nourish you; her benedictions to strengthen you, and her absolution to cleanse you? Have you not the Blessed Virgin for your Mother, and the saints for your patrons and protectors, and, above all, in the Blessed Sacrament, Jesus for your Father? O my soul, rejoice, and sing a song unto the Lord. Alleluja! Praise the Lord, ye servants of God; praise him forever.

"Let all that is within me bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all he has done for thee; who forgiveth all thy iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion; who satisfieth all thy desires with good things. He hath not dealt with thee according to thy sins, nor repaid thee according to thy iniquities: for, according to the height of heaven above the earth, he has strengthened

his mercy towards them that fear him; and as far as the West is from the East, so far hath he removed our iniquities from us. As a father hath compassion on his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear him. Bless the Lord, all ye angels; you that are mighty in strength and execute his Word, hearkening to the voice of his orders. O my soul, bless thou the Lord! My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he that is mighty hath done great things to me: and holy is his name. And his mercy is from generation to generation to them that fear him. He hath shown might in his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their hearts; he hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble; he hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent away empty; he hath received Israel his servant, being mindful of his mercy. As he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his seed forever."

Here it may not be amiss to add a remark of St. Thomas Aquinas: "There are," says he, "three degrees of the virtue of gratitude. The first engraves gratitude on the heart, causing a man to feel the good done him and acknowledge it; this is the lowest degree of gratitude, the very least that a benefit deserves. The second degree excites us to praise and magnify the benefit, and to thank the benefactor with words full of affection. The third and highest consists in adding to gratitude of the heart and mouth that of the hand, by giving something to our benefactor, and more than has been received; for, as the same Doctor remarks elsewhere, to fulfil all the duties of gratitude, we should give something *gratis*, that is, more than we have received, in as much

as to give only the same, is to give nothing. How, then, shall we be able, as the word of God expressly declares, "to give to the Most High according to what He has given us?" (Eccl. xxxv, 12.) What can we do to repay God for all that he has done for us? Shall we search the depths of the sea, and offer to God its hidden treasures, its glittering pearls? Or shall we delve into the bosom of the earth, and offer to God its silver, and gold, and precious stones? Or shall we offer to God the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, the flowers and fruits of the earth? What shall we offer to God in thanksgiving for all his gifts?

Even had we offered to God all these gifts, we should still have done nothing; for the whole earth belongs to God with all its riches. The gold of the mountains, the pearls of the ocean are *his*. His are all the treasures of earth, and sea, and sky. Even were we to offer to him our property, our honor, and our lives, we should still give to God only what he already possesses. What return, then, shall we make to God for all his favors? It is God himself who, in his mercy, has given the devout soul a means of paying off this immense debt of gratitude. This means is the holy Mass. The Mass is an *Eucharistic* Sacrifice, that is to say, a sacrifice of thanksgiving. Jesus Christ has left us himself to be offered in the Mass, by way of thanksgiving, to his heavenly Father. When the priest offers to God the sublimest act of homage possible, holding the body and blood of the Redeemer above the altar, suspended between heaven and earth, he presents the great thanksgiving as the source and object of all honor and glory, saying: "To Thee, O God, the Father Omnipotent, together

with the Holy Ghost, through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ, is all honor and glory," in which words the Church declares that she is incapable of offering up her thanks to God in any other way than by giving him back who became the Victim for the world; as though she were to say: "Thou didst, O Lord, for Christ's sake, look down with graciousness and compassion upon us as *Thy children;* so vouchsafe that we, with grateful hearts, may revere Thee as *our Father* in Christ, Thy Son, here present. We possess nought else that we can offer Thee, save Christ; be graciously pleased to receive this our sacrifice of thanksgiving."

Could my debt of gratitude be even greater than it is, my obligations heavier and more numerous than they are, still, by offering to the heavenly Father his well-beloved Son at Mass to thank him for all his favors, the return is more than sufficient because it is infinite.

"What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that he hath rendered to me? I will take the chalice of salvation and I will call upon the name of the Lord." (Ps. cxv, 12, 13.)

Surely, these are very sweet and consoling reflections, which cannot fail to warm our hearts with the love of Jesus, and to inspire us with profound veneration for the great sacrifice which has so justly been styled the golden key of Paradise. Let us endeavor by meditation and prayer to understand the value of the treasure we possess in the holy Mass, and far from requiring an exhortation to say it as often as possible, the impulse of our own devotion will prompt us to do so.

Having spoken of the *necessity* of making a thanksgiving after Mass, and shown the *manner* in which it may

profitably be made, I must now say a few words about *the length of time* which you should devote to your thanksgiving.

Holy priests desired to spend their whole lifetime in thanksgiving after Mass, and felt a kind of reluctance to attend to temporal affairs after having received the body and blood of Jesus Christ. In the "Imitation of Christ," the blessed Thomas à Kempis complains of the necessity of eating, drinking, sleeping and attending to temporal affairs, because they interrupted his converse with the Lord and Master of his heart. We must, however, bear in mind that the saints never allowed their prayers to interfere with the faithful performance of the duties of their state of life. True devotion does not consist in sacrificing work to prayer; but in making prayer a preparation for work, and work a continuation of prayer. Hence, your thanksgiving should not interfere with the duties of your state of life. Father Avila used to spend two hours in thanksgiving after Mass, even when he was very busy. St. Alphonsus advises every one to devote at least half an hour to his thanksgiving, if it be at all possible.

When there is a crowd at the confessional, especially a crowd of men who cannot wait, or who may not return, the priest may shorten the thanksgiving. He should, however, make, at the very least, a quarter of an hour. Your penitents will learn to wait for you, and they will imitate your good example. Priests must imitate the Apostles, who did not go forth from the supper-room until they had sung a hymn of praise and thanksgiving.

How much time soever you spend in your thanksgiving, do not imagine that it is at an end when you leave the church.

You cannot, it is true, remain always in the church, but you can go to your business with a recollected mind. You cannot always keep your prayer-book and beads in your hand, but you can make ejaculatory prayers to God, at every time and in every place; you can say with a great saint:

"Now, thou art mine and I am thine!
Ah! mortal words can ne'er define
My happiness, thus close to be
United, dearest Lord, with thee.

By day and night I'll sing thy praise,
My voice in grateful anthems raise,
To thee, dear Shepherd of my soul,—
Let me ne'er stray from thy control.

This passing life sufficeth not
To thank thee for my happy lot,
So favor'd by thy love to be—
Ah! Lord, 'twill take eternity.

Had I a thousand lives to lay
In sacrifice each dawning day,
It would, most holy, gracious Lord,
Be for thy love a poor reward.

I cannot love thee as I should,
Nor even as my poor heart would.
For pardon, then, I humbly crave,
And beg thee, still, my soul to save.

Lord Jesus Christ, for thee, I live,
Lord Jesus Christ, I beg thee give
Me grace to die through love of thee,
And be thine own eternally."

St. Aloysius of Gonzaga used to receive Communion once a week; he was accustomed to spend three days in preparation for Communion, and three days in thanksgiving after it. Now, how did he manage this? Was he all

the time prostrate before the altar, or reading a spiritual book? Not at all; he went wherever obedience called him, quietly performing his duties and keeping his heart united to God. He offered up all his actions to Jesus Christ by way of thanksgiving; and he made now and then some short acts of faith, hope and charity; some acts of self-oblation, or thanksgiving, or supplication. By this means the angelic youth was enabled to walk continually with God; one Communion was the preparation for another; thus he constantly advanced in purity of heart and in love for Jesus Christ. Now, every one who has but little time at his disposal, can make such a thanksgiving as this; if not with all the perfection of St. Aloysius, at least with great fruit and consolation. Every one can offer to Jesus the crosses he may meet with during the day, and bear them patiently for the sake of his dear Lord. You can crush the movements of impatience, the thought of vanity, the immodest glance, the word of bitterness, the laugh of folly, the look of pride. You can, for the love of the good Jesus, be just and true, pure and obedient, pious and humble. This is the way to honor and please Jesus Christ. Our Lord did not institute this adorable sacrament to give us a little excitement of devotion, but to make us *holy*. "I have chosen you," said he, "that you should bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." "In this is my Father glorified that you bring forth very much fruit."

Make then, O priest of the Lord, a good use of the precious moments after Mass. You will never fully understand in this world how precious they are. Nothing will cause you more confusion after death than the little account you have made of the Blessed Sacrament. It is

related in the Book of Esther, that one night when King Assuerus could not sleep, he ordered the chronicles of his reign to be read to him. When the reader came to the place where it was related that Mardochai the Jew, had once crushed a wicked plot against the king's life, Assuerus asked, "What reward did Mardochai receive for his fidelity?" "None at all," answered the courtiers. The king thereupon ordered the long-delayed acknowledgment to be instantly made to his deliverer. He commanded that Mardochai should be carried in procession through the streets, clothed in royal apparel, crowned with a royal crown, and that the herald should cry aloud: "Thus shall he be honored whom the king hath a mind to honor."

To you, also, O priest of God, there will come a sleepless night, when mortal sickness shall tell you that death is near; then you will look back upon your life, and see so many benefits for which you have made no acknowledgment. When you think of your Masses you will say, What acknowledgment have I made to my deliverer who has so often saved my life? When the two disciples at Emmaus understood that it was Jesus who had been walking with them, they remembered how their hearts had burned as he conversed with them; so, at the hour of death, you will see how precious were the graces you received, when Jesus, in the holy sacrament, came into your heart. Your communions will then seem to have been the greatest blessings of your life. The world will have disappeared, friends will have deserted you, your whole past life will seem to have been but a dream; but the moments when you received your Saviour will appear to you in their true value. Ah! what regret will you then feel for your unfaithfulness! How

earnestly will you desire to live your life over again in order to repair your indevout thanksgivings! A holy nun, who had suffered very much in this life, appeared after death to one of her sisters in religion. She declared that she would willingly return to the world and undergo once more all the pains she had suffered here on earth, provided she could say but *one Hail Mary*, because by that one prayer her glory and joy would be increased by one degree for all eternity. (P. Michael a St. Catharina. Lib. III. Tract. 16.) Now if the blessed in heaven are willing to do so much for *one Hail Mary;* what would they not do for one Mass? And yet that great happiness of increasing their glory is no longer in their power. It is the privilege of us mortals alone to be able to increase our glory by feeding on the flesh of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist. I repeat it, then: Make a great account of your Masses. Do now what you will wish to have done at the hour of death. Make the most of every moment of your thanksgiving. Give to Jesus Christ all the honor that you possibly can. You cannot do as Assuerus did. Jesus is great, and you are poor and wretched; you cannot give him royal honor—you can but give him the tribute of an humble, loving heart. But even this he is pleased to accept. Offer your heart to him, then, in all sincerity. Converse with him reverently and familiarly whilst you have him in your heart; try to obtain some grace from him which may remain after he has ceased to be sacramentally present with you, and which may enable you to say your next Mass with greater devotion. Thus you will live always united with Jesus, and, by your example and conversation, you will edify your neighbor.

St. Veronica Juliana had, even at the age of three, a

great devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. Now, as she was not permitted to receive Communion, she used to come very close to her mother after she had communicated, and cling to her dress. One day, her mother noticed the child, and asked her why she thus hung around her, and she replied: "Mother, you taste of Jesus, and you smell of Jesus!" If you, too, O priest of the Lord, are careful to make a good thanksgiving, you will carry with you a sweet odor of sanctity, and angels and good Christians will love to keep you company. You will advance in virtue and happiness. While the tepid and indifferent are bitterly lamenting in purgatory their negligent thanksgivings, or cursing themselves in hell for their folly, you will be blessing in heaven the retired and mortified life which gave you time to love and honor your Saviour. Your most bountiful Lord will reward the little honor you paid him in life by a great and royal recompense. He will do far more for you than Assuerus did for Mardochai. He will cause you to be honored by all the angels and saints in heaven; he will clothe you in royal attire and "confess your name before his Father," as he himself has promised: "Whosoever shall glorify me, him will I glorify!" (1 Kings ii, 30.)

CHAPTER IX.

The Spirit of Sacrifice.

The priest, when saying Mass, should *offer himself* to God in union with the spotless Victim on the altar. "Necesse est, ut quum hæc agimus," says St. Gregory, "nosmet-ipsos Deo in cordis contritione mactemus, quia qui passionis Dominicæ mysteria celebramus, debemus imitare quod agimus. Tunc ergo vere pro nobis hostia erit Deo, cum nos ipsos hostiam fecerimus." (Dial. 4. p. 60.)

If you had many hearts to give to God, the blessing of creation would claim one, redemption another, the priestly character a third, the heavenly bliss promised you a fourth. Now you have but one heart. Can you refuse to give that one to God? Suppose you were to live for centuries to come, would it be too much to spend all that time in thanksgiving for so many graces? Now, you have but one life of short duration. Can you think of dividing it between God and creatures?

"If I knew," said St. Francis de Sales, "that there was a single fibre in my heart, which did not beat for God, I would tear it out at once; and if I thought that my whole heart did not bear the impress of Jesus crucified for me, I would not keep it in my breast for a moment."

"Every one," says St. Augustine, "becomes identified with the object of his love. You are that which you love; if you love earth, you are earth; if you love God,—what shall I say—you are God."

The love of the priest for God must show itself especially by the spirit of self-sacrifice. This spirit of sacri-

fice is the very essence of the priesthood. We read in the Gospel that John quitted his nets: "Relictis retibus." That was the law, the example and the consecration of the spirit of renunciation and of poverty in the future Church. Ancient society had frequently beheld the same man at once priest, prince of the people, governor of the state, and even general of the army. Such will not be the spirit of the new priesthood; and it is not enough that, by a preliminary movement, the Apostle has elevated himself from earth by virginity, if by a second flight he does not raise himself above the lower region wherein the crowd seeks its prey of pride and riches. "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Why take ye thought for your food or for your raiment? I sent you forth without scrip, without a tunic, and without money: did ye suffer want for any of those things? Consider the lilies of the fields, consider the birds of the air. . . ." Thus pure as the lily and free as the bird, a society was springing into life, which, taking nothing from this world, was to reign over the earth whilst hovering above it—*Excelsior cœlis*—higher than the heavens. That is the definition of the priest by St. Paul. Thus did God will it, thus did men demand it; thus raised above earth, that man, disengaged from all things, will draw all to himself. St. Bernard knew it well. "Poverty," said he, "is like a great wing which bears us rapidly towards the kingdom of heaven." (Serm. iv. de Adventu.) It is the law of true liberty, of true dignity and conquest: Relictis retibus.

Oh! when, then, shall we have quitted all our nets?

The Evangelist adds that John left his father: *Relicto patre.* That is the second surrender—that of the fam-

ily, and it is the most heart-rending. To dedicate our life to the task of consoling all the world without keeping near any one to console us, to assist and to encourage us; to renounce our own family after having already relinquished the right to give ourselves to another; and thus to journey onward through a lonely old age, to a foreign tomb which has not received the bones of our ancestors: behold, that is the sacrifice which the new Apostolate required. "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." (Matt. x, 37.) It was no longer the priesthood of the East, the inheritance of a race, handed down in a family, planting its immovable castes in the soil—it is social ministry, it is to quit all, to sever one's self from all, to immolate all to God; it is the service of the man detached from his own family as he is from himself—all this and still more beside is included in that *relicto patre*, which would be a barbarous word did not the Gospel immediately add the divine word: *Relicto patre, secuti sunt Jesum.*

There remain to us, therefore, Jesus, souls, and heaven. The Church knows it well. She knows that at the word of heroic renunciation, "Behold, Lord, we have left all things, and have followed thee," she could answer without deceiving one single heart: "whoever shall have left home, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for my sake and for the Gospel, shall receive a hundred times as much, now in this time; houses and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions, it is true, but also in the world to come life everlasting." (Mark x, 28–30.)

The Church can, therefore, without scruple and remorse demand of her priests a renouncement which she felt herself so capable of recompensing.

"People in the world," said the Right Rev. John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, England, "are held in esteem in proportion to the greatness of their earthly possessions; but priests are held in esteem in proportion to their detachment from all earthly goods. The priest who suffers privations in order to assist the poor —the priest who, in secret, sells part of his clothes, out of charity for the indigent—whom charity makes suffer the effects of poverty—that priest is a golden priest, canonized by the Gospel as well as by philosophy. How noble and beautiful is not this detachment from all earthly goods in the priest. Such a detachment is the powerful lever in our apostolic ministry.

"Become rich in the sanctuary and you destroy souls in proportion as you acquire riches. On the contrary, if you become poor so as not to be able to give any more because you have given away all you had, you can give the precious alms of St. Peter: Argentum et aurum non habeo, quod autem habeo, hoc tibi do; in nomine Domini tibi dico: surge et ambula. (Act. iii, 6).

"Can it be said of a priest that he is really poor? What are the riches of the priest? 'Divitiæ nostræ,' says St. Prosper, 'sunt pudicitia, pietas, humilitas, mansuetudo?' (Lib. 2. De vita contemp.) Your riches, says the Psalmist, is God, who has become your portion. 'Erunt levitæ mei, et ego hereditas eorum.' (Num. iii, 12.) Your riches are your detachment from everything, for such a detachment leads you to God. 'Dixi Domino: Deus meus es tu, quoniam bonorum meorum non eges.' (Ps. xv, 2.) Attachment to the goods of this world makes priests stubborn towards their superiors and harsh towards their parishioners.

"How can we expect our flocks to flee from the pomps and vanities of this wicked world when we as their pastors set our minds on the very things that we forbid? If we should teach according to our duty, how absurdly would our doctrines sound in the ears of those who should hear us! And if we teach one thing and do another, who believes our report, which would seem to them not otherwise than if we should throw down with one hand what we build with the other?

"We preach humility, sobriety, contempt of the world; and the people perceive in the same men that preach this doctrine, pride and haughtiness of mind, excess in apparel and resignation of ourselves to all worldly pomps and vanities. And what is this otherwise than to set the people in a stand, whether they shall follow the sight of their own eyes or the belief of what they hear?

"Excuse me, reverend Fathers, seeing herein I blame no man more than I do myself; for sundry times, when I have set myself to the care of my flock, to govern my Church, to answer the enemies of Christ, suddenly there has come a message to me from the Court that I must attend such a triumph or receive such an ambassador. What have we to do with princes' courts? If we are in love with majesty, is there one of greater excellence than he whom we serve? If we are in love with stately buildings are there roofs higher than our churches? If we are in love with apparel, is there a greater ornament than that of the priesthood? Or is there better company than a communion with the saints? Truly, reverend Fathers, what this vanity in temporal things may work in you I know not; but sure I am that in myself I find it to be a great

impediment to devotion; wherefore I think it necessary that we, who are the heads, should begin to give example to all as to those particulars whereby we may all be the better conformable to the image of God."

It is thus that this saintly bishop spoke, and it is thus that all good bishops and priests speak. Read the splendid oration which St. Chrysostom pronounced when his enemies were on the point of sentencing him to banishment.

"What can I fear?" said he. "Will it be death? But you know that Christ is my life, and that I shall gain by death. Will it be exile? But the earth and all its fulness is the Lord's. Will it be the loss of wealth? But we brought nothing into the world, and can carry nothing out. Thus all the terrors of the world are contemptible in my eyes; and I smile at all its good things. Poverty I do not fear. Riches I do not sigh for. Death I do not shrink from; and life I do not desire, save only for the progress of your souls. But you know, my friends, the true cause of my banishment. It is that I have not lined my house with rich tapestry. It is that I have not clothed me in robes of silk. It is that I have not flattered the effeminacy and sensuality of certain men, nor laid gold and silver at their feet. But why need I say more? Jezebel is raising her persecution, and Elias must fly; Herodias is taking her pleasure, and John must be bound with chains; the Egyptian wife tells her lie, and Joseph must be thrust into prison. And so, if they banish me, I shall be like Elias; if they throw me into the mire, I shall be like Jeremiah; if they plunge me into the sea, I shall be like the prophet Jonah; if into the pit, I shall be like Daniel; if they stone me, it is

Stephen that I shall resemble; John the forerunner, if they cut off my head; Paul, if they beat me with stripes; Isaiah, if they saw me asunder."

Such is the language of all those priests who have the spirit of Christ—the spirit of self-sacrifice. The priest must either sacrifice himself or he will be sacrificed. In the holy Mass our divine Saviour is *offerens* and *sacrificium;* and so must the priest be every day of his life, both priest and victim. The more sensual the world is, the more self-denying must the priest be. This is his vocation.

"Vos estis sal terræ," says our Saviour; "vos non estis de hoc mundo." It is the priest who preserves society from corruption and utter destruction. Far better a few good priests filled with zeal and self-denial than a crowd of worldly-minded priests who seek only themselves. Where the priests are few and virtuous, the priesthood is respected and the people are well-disposed. Where, on the contrary, the priests are numerous and worldly-minded the priesthood is but little esteemed, grace is abused, and the people become indifferent, and hardened, and easily take scandal.

Now what must we do to obtain the spirit of sacrifice?

We have said that the best preparation for Mass is to recall the sufferings of our Lord's Passion, and to consider with what an excess of love he devoted himself for us to the death of the Cross; one of the chief ends for which he instituted the holy Sacrifice of his Body and Blood, being that we might have his Passion ever present to our minds. "As often," says the Apostle, "as you shall eat this bread and drink this chalice you shall show the death of the Lord until he come." (2 Cor. xi, 26.) The

reason why this preparation for Mass is the best of all is because it is best calculated to produce in us the spirit of sacrifice, which is the spirit of Christianity, the spirit of Christ himself. It is necessary that when we offer the Sacrifice of the Mass, we should offer ourselves also to God in sacrifice; and since we celebrate the mysteries of the Passion of our Saviour, we ought to imitate what we celebrate. Jesus Christ will be truly a Victi : for us if we become a victim with him. In this sense St. Peter calls all Christians a *holy priesthood.* What is more royal, more sacerdotal, than to subject the mind to God and the body to the Spirit? Many priests offer to God their prayers, alms, fasts, and mortifications; but few offer *themselves*, and make an oblation of their *hearts.* They always secretly reserve to themselves the disposal of their own will. This division is displeasing to God; it is not the sacrifice of Abel, but of Cain, who offered to God the fruits of the earth, but reserved to himself his heart and will, as St. Augustine says.

We should remember, therefore, that, as we take Christ's place at the altar, we should also have the spirit of the divine Victim—the spirit of self-sacrifice. We should offer ourselves with him; we should lay on the altar the oblation of our soul and body, our memory, will, and understanding; our thoughts, words, actions, and intentions of the day; our life, death, and whole being, that all may be sanctified by union with him who is immolated for the love of us. We should offer all generously to God, with self-renunciation, that the mystic death of Jesus in his temple may produce in our souls a similar death—the death of our evil inclinations to worldly pleasures and allurements, but above all, the death of our self-will, in

order thus to become a fit holocaust in the sight of God, of which he may dispose according to his good pleasure, for his greater glory and for that of our own soul and the souls of our fellow-men.

The holy Mass is a worship of sacrifice, and a worship of sacrifice implies a life of sacrifice. This is most beautifully illustrated in the lives of the martyrs and of all the saints. One who reads the Acts of the Martyrs and the lives of the saints cannot help seeing this.

It was at this holy Sacrifice that they obtained that wonderful spirit of sacrifice which taught them to give their lives for the love of Jesus Christ, who offered himself daily for them upon the altar. We have another most beautiful illustration of this truth in the life of St. Lawrence, the martyr and deacon.

St. Lawrence was one of the seven deacons of the city of Rome in the third century of the Christian era. As deacon, it was his office to serve the Mass of St. Xistus, who was at that time Pope. When the persecution broke out under the Emperor Valerius, St. Xistus was seized and carried off to martyrdom. As he was on his way, St. Lawrence followed him weeping and saying: "Father, where are you going without your son? Whither are you going, O holy priest, without your deacon? You were never wont to offer sacrifice (to celebrate Mass) without me, your minister; wherein have I displeased you? Have you found me wanting in my duty? Try me now, and see whether you have made choice of an unfit minister for dispensing the Blood of the Lord." And St. Xistus replied: "I do not leave you, my son; but a greater trial and a more glorious victory are reserved for you who are stout and in the

vigor of youth. We are spared on account of our weakness and old age. You shall follow me in three days."

And, in fact, three days after St. Lawrence was burnt to death, his faith rendering him joyful, even mirthful, in his sufferings.

In the words of St. Lawrence we see the sentiments with which he was accustomed to attend Mass. As he knelt at the foot of the altar at which the Pope was celebrating, clothed in the beautiful dress of a deacon, his soul was filled with the thoughts of God's greatness and goodness, and together with the offering of the heavenly Victim, he used to offer his fervent desire to do something to honor the divine Majesty; the color sometimes mounting high in his youthful cheek as he thought how joyfully he would yield his own heart's blood as a sacrifice if the occasion should present itself. Martyrdom to him was but a natural completion of Mass. It was the realization of his habitual worship.

In the early history of the city of St. Augustine in Florida, it is related that a priest who was attacked by a party of Indians, asked permission to say Mass before he died. This was granted him, and the savages waited quietly till the Mass was ended. Then the priest knelt on the altar steps and received the death-blow from his murderers. With what sentiments must that priest have said Mass! with what devotion! with what reverence! with what self-oblation! So I suppose St. Lawrence, St. Xistus, and the Christians of the olden time were accustomed always to celebrate and hear Mass with the greatest desire to honor God in the most complete spirit of self-sacrifice.

This spirit of self-sacrifice was not required in bishops and priests in those days of cruel persecution only; the same spirit has always been required in the priests of Christ. Without this spirit of self-sacrifice, the pastor of souls is but a hireling to his flock. What efforts does he make to overcome his evil inclinations? What courage does he display in gaining the victory over his passions? What charity does he show in attending the sick? What zeal in teaching catechism to children? What fervor in preaching the word of God? What devotion at the altar and in the administration of the sacraments? What assiduity in prayer and meditation? What modesty in his exterior conduct? What care in avoiding dangerous visits and familiarities? What anxiety in employing his time usefully? What patience and meekness in the confessional? What kindness to the poor and abandoned? What promptitude in rising regularly at an early hour in the morning? What fervor in reciting his divine office? What watchfulness over his senses? Alas! what virtue can we expect to find in a priest destitute of the spirit of self-sacrifice? Can we gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?

To celebrate Mass daily without an increase of the spirit of self-sacrifice is to be ignorant altogether of one of the principal fruits to be derived from Mass, or to remain a faithless and lukewarm priest. Indeed, the sins of so many priests proceed from no other source than from the want of the spirit of self-sacrifice. The avaricious priest does not want to sacrifice his passion for money; the slothful finds it too difficult to overcome his laziness in order to comply with his duties; in a word, wherever the spirit of sacrifice is wanting, there can be

no faithful compliance with the commandments of God and the Church; there can be no faithful correspondence to the divine inspirations; there we find nothing but egotism or selfishness. It is, therefore, of the greatest importance for pastors of souls to celebrate Mass in this spirit of sacrifice, as otherwise they are wanting in what is most essential to the priesthood.

This great truth cannot be illustrated better nor impressed more deeply on our mind than by relating what our Lord one day said to St. Catharine of Sienna.

We read in the life of this saint that from her very childhood she experienced a great desire to become a perfect holocaust to the Lord. The older she grew the better she understood that this was the duty of every good Christian, and that she could not please the Lord perfectly unless she became his without the least reserve. So she most fervently begged God to teach her the shortest way to become his own, and lead the life of a holy Christian. Our Lord heard her prayer and said to her: "Know then, that the salvation of my servants and their perfection consists in this only, that they do my will, and that they endeavor with their whole strength to do it always; that they obey, glorify, and look to me alone at all times. The more carefully they do this, the more they advance in perfection; for then it is that they adhere and unite themselves more closely to me, who am Supreme Perfection itself.

"In order that you may understand this sublime truth, expressed in a few words, consider my Christ, in whom I am well pleased. He annihilated himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of man, in order that by his example and word, he might lead you

back to the way of truth, from which you had gone astray so very far, walking in the greatest darkness of the intellect. He was obedient unto death, teaching you by his persevering obedience how your salvation depends altogether on your firm resolution to do nothing but my will alone. He who carefully reflects and meditates upon his life and doctrine, will soon come to understand that the summit of perfection consists in nothing else than in the uninterrupted, persevering, and constant accomplishment of my will. This he has declared repeatedly. 'Not every one who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who obeys the will of my Father who is in heaven, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.' He means to say that no one, whosoever he may be, and whatsoever exterior good works he may perform for my name's sake, shall be admitted to the glory of life everlasting, if he has not performed all according to my will.

"He has said again: 'I have come down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And: 'Not my will, but thine be done.' Now, if, in imitation of your Saviour, you will do my will, in which alone your salvation consists, you must necessarily renounce your own will in everything; you must make it die, as it were, having no longer any regard for it. The more you die to yourself, the more you endeavor to empty yourself of what is your own, the more will I fill you with what is my own. But no one will arrive at this perfection unless he constantly renounces his self-will. He who neglects this, neglects also this sublime perfection; but he who practises it, does my will in a perfect manner, and I am well pleased in him. I am always near such a

one; for nothing gives me greater pleasure than to be with you and to co-operate with you. My delight is to be with the children of men, and to change you, by my grace, into myself, so that you may become one with me, by partaking of my perfections, of my peace, and of my joy. But this I will not do lest you so wish; for I will never violate the privileges of your free-will.

"Now, in order that you may be inflamed with a vehement desire of submitting your will most perfectly to mine, you have but to consider my ardent desire of being with you. This you will understand the better, the more deeply you reflect how I have willed that my only-begotten Son should assume flesh, that my divinity, stripping itself, as it were, of its majesty, should be united to your humanity, in order that, by this inconceivable love of mine, you might be induced, drawn, nay, sweetly forced, to unite your will in the same manner with mine, and to remain thus always united with me.

"Moreover, consider how I have willed that this my Beloved Son should give himself up to so horrible and cruel a death as that of the Cross; that by his sufferings he should cancel your sins, which had separated you so far from me.

"Finally, consider how I have prepared for you a precious banquet in the most august Sacrament of his own Flesh and Blood, in order that, receiving him, you might be transformed into me; for as bread and wine which you take become one with the substance of your body, so you too by receiving him become spiritually changed and transformed into myself, because he is one with me.

"It is certain that your perfect welfare depends on your perfect renunciation of self; for I will fill you with

my grace in proportion as you empty yourself of your will. This participation in my will effects your perfection by my grace, without which you would be totally destitute of all virtue and dignity. Now, in order to obtain this grace, you must, in profound humility and in deep knowledge of your own misery and poverty, ardently desire and strenuously endeavor to obey me only, and do nothing but my will. In order to be enabled to effect this, you must, by means of your memory and intellect, build for yourself a cell out of my will. You must keep this cell entirely closed, remaining shut up within it, so that whithersoever you go, you may not go out of it; and whithersoever you look, you may not look out of it. Regulate all your affections according to my will. Think, speak, and do nothing but what is pleasing to me, and what you know to be in accordance with my will. Then the Holy Ghost will teach you everything you have to do.

"There is yet another means by which you may attain to a perfect renunciation of your will, namely, if there are servants of mine who will teach and guide you to do my will, submit yourself to them, by giving up into their hands your own self and all that is yours, always obeying and following their advice. You hear me, if you listen to my wise and faithful servants.

"Moreover, I wish that you should often meditate, with an unyielding faith and an elevated mind, upon me, your most glorious God, who created you, in order to make you capable of partaking of my own happiness; of the happiness of the Most High and All-Powerful Being; who does for you everything that I please; whose will no one can resist; without whose will nothing can happen to you, as I spoke by the Prophet Amos. 'Meditate upon me, your

God, whose wisdom and knowledge are infinite; who see and penetrate everything at a glance; who cannot be deceived nor disturbed by any error; who govern you, and at the same time heaven and earth; because I am God, the All-Wise Being.

"And in order that you may understand something of the effects of this my wisdom, you must know that, from the evil of guilt and punishment I can draw a good which surpasses by far the extent of the evil itself. Furthermore, I wish that you should meditate upon me, your God, as being most perfect in love and in kindness; whence I cannot will anything but what is good, salutary, and profitable to you and to others; for no evil can go out from me. I hate nothing, and, as I have created man through love, so do I continue to love him with infinite love.

"To these truths you must always cling with steadfast faith. From a constant meditation upon the same it must be clear to you how, under my wise Providence, afflictions, temptations, hardships, sickness, and other adversities, are permitted to befall you for no other reason than for your own good, in order that by them you may be induced to amend what is bad in you, and to commence to walk in the road of virtue, which leads you to me, your Supreme Good.

"If this light of faith shines on you, you will also understand that I, your God, know better how to promote your welfare, and wish more for it, than you yourself; and that you, without my grace, would be ignorant of it, unable to promote it, nay, even not able to will it.

"This being true, you must endeavor with your whole strength to submit your will to mine; then peace will always reign in your heart, for I will be with you; because

my habitation is in peace. There will be no scandal of sin for you, that is to say, no occasion of sin; for great is the peace of those who love my Name; they shall not fall, because they love nothing but my law, that is to say, my will. My law is that rule according to which all things are directed. Their union with me is so close, and their delight in doing my will so great, that, happen whatever may, nothing but sin is able to disturb or disquiet them. Their souls being totally purified, they see without deception that from me, the Ruler of the Universe, who govern all things with wonderful wisdom, charity, and order, nothing but good can proceed, and that, consequently, I can take care of both their temporal and spiritual welfare far better and with more salutary effect than they themselves.

"Persevering in the consideration that all things which happen and which they may endure, proceed from me and not from their neighbor, they feel animated with unconquerable patience, baffling every attack, so that they suffer everything, not only with a tranquil mind, but also with a cheerful heart, because in all things, whether exterior or interior, they taste the sweetness of my unspeakable love.

"And this is to give true honor to my goodness, namely, to believe and consider with a thankful and cheerful heart, in all difficulties and adversities, that I order all things sweetly, that everything proceeds from the profound source of my love, and that nothing but your own will and self-love hinder and destroy the fruit of this consideration and the union of your will with mine. Were you to do away with them, there would be no longer any hell for you, either in the world to come,

with its perpetual torments of both soul and body, or in this world, by continual disquietudes of mind and the ever-recurring anxieties of exterior and interior troubles.

"Well, if you wish to live, endeavor to die to this life, drowning yourself in the unchangeable life of perpetual glory, and doing away with your own self-will. 'Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord,' and, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit.' These see me in mutual love in their earthly pilgrimage, and will see me in heaven in everlasting bliss and glory."

These are the lessons which our Lord gave to St. Catharine of Sienna, and which he still gives to us at Mass. If we celebrate it in the proper spirit, we shall experience in our soul a great desire to become a holocaust to the Lord, in order to be altogether his as he is altogether ours in the Sacrifice of the Mass. It is at this holy Sacrifice that he inspires such a desire, and the manner of resolutely carrying it out.

We have a beautiful example of the spirit of sacrifice and complete detachment in the Count Rougemont, of whom St. Vincent de Paul relates the following: "I knew," he says, "in the Province of Bresse, the Chevalier Rougemont, who, in his duels, had wounded and killed an almost incredible number. After his conversion to a very edifying life, I had the pleasure of visiting him at his own residence; he began to speak to me about his devout exercises and practices of virtue, and, among others, of trying to acquire a complete detachment from creatures. "I feel assured," said he to me, "that if I am perfectly detached from creatures, I will be most perfectly united to my Lord and God; for this reason I often examine my conscience to see whether I

entertain some attachment, either to myself, or to my relatives, friends or neighbors; or to the riches and comforts of life, or to any passion or disorderly desire whatsoever that might prevent me from being perfectly united to God, and resting entirely in him alone. I begin to pray to God, to enable me to root out at once whatever I notice to be an obstacle to my perfect union with him."

"I remember," continues St. Vincent de Paul, "a remarkable act of this Count, which he himself related to me, and which shows how earnestly he went to work to gain a complete detachment from everything; an act which I can never think of without admiration. "One day," he said to me, "I was riding along on horseback. I stopped to make an offering of myself to God. After this I reflected to find out whether there was still something left to which I might have at least some trivial attachment. After having carefully examined all my occupations, recreations, honors, and even the least affections and inclinations of my heart, I found out that I entertained still some affection for the sword which I wore at my side. Why do you wear this sword? I said to myself. But what evil has it done you? Leave it where it is! It has rendered you many great services; it has enabled you to save yourself in thousands of dangers. Should you again be attacked without it, surely you would be lost; but should you fall out again with your neighbor, would you have sufficient self-command to leave it where it is, and not offend God again? My God! what must I do? Shall I still love the instrument of my confusion, and of so many sins? Alas! I see my heart is yet attached to this miserable instrument! This said, I alighted from my

horse, took a stone, and broke my sword into pieces. After this victory over myself I felt completely detached from everything, caring no more for anything in this world, and feeling most powerfully drawn to love God above all things." "Behold," said St. Vincent, "behold how happy we should be, and what progress we should make in virtue, if, like this nobleman, we would purify our hearts from all earthly affections. If our hearts were completely detached from all creatures, how soon would our souls be united to God!"

Let us, then, celebrate Mass, daily if possible, in the spirit of sacrifice and detachment, and this spirit will make our prayers all-powerful; it will prevail upon the Lord to grant all our petitions. "If thou hear the voice of the Lord thy God," (Deut. xxx, 10) or, as Isaias says, "If thou turn away thy foot from doing thy own will," (lviii, 13,) in order to follow mine, I also will listen to thy voice when thou prayest to me. Hence, Cornelius à Lapide says: "If you wish that God should do your will when praying, you must first do what he wishes and commands you. If you wish that he should turn to you, you must go to meet him; if you desire that he should delight in you, you must delight in him." "Delight in the Lord," says the Psalmist, "and he will give thee the requests of thy heart." (Ps. xxvi, 4.)

Now who can be said in truth to go and meet the Lord at Mass and delight in him? He alone who with a cheerful heart does the Lord's will. "His petitions," as the royal prophet says, "shall be granted." Our Lord said one day to St. Gertrude, when she was praying for one of her sisters in religion, who wished that God should grant her prayer for divine consolations: "It is she her-

self who puts obstacles to the consolations of my grace, by attachment to her own will and judgment. As one who closes his nostrils cannot enjoy the fragrance of fresh flowers, so the sweet consolations of my grace cannot be experienced by him who is attached to his own will and judgment."

The response to our petitions at Mass depends, then, on our faithful fulfilment of the will of God. "You ought to know, brethren," says St. Augustine, "that God will comply with our wishes in prayer only in proportion as we try to comply with his commandments." (Vol. x, serm. 61.) We must not be astonished, therefore, if we see or hear how the saints obtained everything from God. "He who honoreth his father, . . . in the day of his prayer he shall be heard." (Eccles. iii, 6.) Those who honor their Heavenly Father perfectly, by an exact compliance with his Divine will, he honors by doing their will.

St. Francis of Assisi would often stop on his journey suddenly, as soon as he perceived within himself an interior inspiration of God, and giving it all his attention, he would say: "Speak, O Lord, for thy servant heareth!" He would stop as long as the inspiration lasted, listening to it in all humility, and promptly executing whatever our Lord would inspire him to do. For this reason did he become so great and powerful with God. One day as he was praying in these words, "Lord, have compassion on poor sinners," Jesus Christ appeared to him, saying: "Francis, thy will is one with mine; I am therefore ready to grant all thy prayers."

"Oh, how powerful should we be with God," exclaims Cornelius à Lapide, "were we always ready to lend a

ready ear and an obedient heart to his voice!" Like St. Dominic, we would experience that there is nothing that could not be obtained by prayer. Indeed, so good is our Lord to those who do his will perfectly, that he not only grants their prayers, but even anticipates them. Tauler relates of a pious virgin, whose spiritual director he was, that many people used to come and recommend their affairs to her prayers. She always promised to pray for them, but often forgot to do so. Nevertheless, the wishes of those who had recommended themselves to her were fulfilled. These persons then came and thanked her, feeling persuaded that through her prayers God had helped them. The pious virgin blushed, and confessed that although she had intended to pray for them, she had forgotten to do so. Wishing to know the reason why our Lord blessed all those who recommended themselves to her prayers, she said to him: "Why, O Lord, is it that Thou dost bless all those who recommend themselves to my prayers, even though I do forget to pray for them?" Our Lord answered her: "My daughter, from that very day on which you gave up your will, in order always to do mine, I gave up mine to do yours, wherefore I even comply with the pious intentions which you forget to carry out." (Serm. i, De Circuncis.) Thus is verified what the Lord promised by the prophet Isaias: (lxv, 24.) "And it shall come to pass that before they call I will hear."

Would that all priests would understand what has been said in this chapter, and practise faithfully the lesson inculcated! How happy would they make themselves, and thousands of their fellow-men by the celebration of each Mass!

CHAPTER X.

The Breviary.

The Church obliges every priest, under pain of mortal sin, to recite the divine office every day. She intends thereby to carry out the injunction of our Lord to "pray without ceasing." The Church strives to imitate, here on earth, the life of the blessed in heaven. She wishes that all her children should praise and thank God every moment of their lives; that they should pray continually for the salvation of all men. Now, as the lay-people usually neglect this great duty of prayer, the holy Church wishes that her consecrated servants at least should every hour of the day, pray in her name and in the name of the people.

According to theologians it would be a grievous sin to omit wilfully a considerable part of the Breviary, as for instance, one of the Little Hours, or one of the Nocturns.

The Breviary is the prayer of the Church. It is the prayer inspired by the Holy Ghost who prays therein "in gemitibus inennarrabilibus." (Rom. viii, 26.)

The Breviary is the prayer of the *entire* Church. The whole Church prays every day with the priest. Think of the wonderful power of united prayer. If the prayer of one just man is so powerful, how powerful must be the prayer of the entire Church!

The Breviary contains so many passages which en-

liven our faith, excite our confidence in God, love for him and all kinds of good desires.

What strength does not our faith receive from the psalms! They place before our eyes the eternal truths of the existence of God, of the creation of the world, of the last things and of the immortality of the soul. The psalms contain also so many predictions of the great work of our redemption. These prophecies were made so many years before the event.

How many beautiful affections of confidence in God do we find in the psalms? "In te, Domine speravi, non confundar in æternum.(Ps., xxx, 2.) In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum. (Ibid.) Quoniam in me speravit liberabo eum. (Ps. xc, 14.) Laudans invocabo Dominum et ab inimicis meis salvus ero. (Ps. xvii, 4.) Protector est omnium sperantium in se. (Ib.) Dominus firmamentum meum et refugium meum et liberator meus. (Ib.) Vivet anima mea et laudabit te. (Ps. cxviii, 175.) Misericordias Domini in æternum cantabo. (Ps. lxxxviii, 2.) Spiritus tuus bonus deducet me in terram rectam. (Ps. cxlii, 10.) Dominus illuminatio mea et salus mea, quem timebo? (Ps. xxvi. 1.) Sperantem autem in Domino misericordia circumdabit. (Ps. xxxi, 10.) Fiat misericordia tua, Domine, super nos, quemadmodum speravimus in te. (Ps. xxxii, 22.)

Hence many acts of love are contained in the psalms! Diligam te Domine fortitudo mea. (Ps. xvii, 2.) Quid mihi est in cœlo? Et a te quid volui super terram? Deus cordis mei et pars mea in æternum. (Ps. lxxii, 25, 26.) Sitivit in te anima mea quam multipliciter tibi caro mea." (Ps. lxii, 2.) Satiabor cum apparuerit gloria tua. (Ps. xvi, 15.) Confiteantur tibi populi, Deus, confitean-

tur tibi populi omnes. (Ps. lxvi, 4.) Magnificate Dominum mecum, et exaltemus nomen ejus in idipsum. (Ps. xxiii, 4.) Memor fui Dei et delectatus sum. (Ps. lxxvi, 4.) Paratum cor meum, Deus, paratum cor meum. (Ps. cvii, 2.) Quemadmodum desiderat cervus ad fontes aquarum, ita desiderat anima mea ad te, Deus. (Ps. xli, 1.) Quando veniam et apparebo ante faciem Dei? (Ib.)

How many acts of thanksgiving? Quid retribuam Domino, pro omnibus quæ retribuit mihi. (Ps. cxv, 12.) Venite, audite et narrabo, omnes qui timetis Deum, quanta fecit animæ meæ. (Ps. lxv, 16.) How many acts of humility? Nisi quia Dominus adjuvit me, paulo minus habitasset in inferno anima mea. (Ps. xciii, 17.) Eruisti animam meam ex inferno inferiori. (Ps. lxxxv, 13.) Et non intres in judicium cum servo tuo, quia non justificabitur in conspectu tuo omnis vivens. (Ps. cxlii, 2.) Ego autem sum vermis et non homo, opprobrium hominum et abjectio plebis. (Ps. xxi, 7.) Erravi sicut ovis quæ periit, quære servum tuum. (Ps. cxviii, 176.)

How many acts of repentance? Iniquitatem odio habui et abominatus sum. (Ps. cxviii, 163.) Exitus aquarum deduxerunt oculi mei, quia non custodierunt legem tuam. (Ib). Fuerunt mihi lachrymæ meæ panes die ac nocte, dum dicitur mihi quotidie: ubi est Deus tuus? (Ps. xli, 4.) How many good purposes? Et custodiam legem tuam semper. (Ps. cxviii, 44.) In æternum non obliviscar justificationes tuus. (Ib.) Juravi et statui custodire judicia justitiæ. (Ib.) Ab omni via mala prohibui pedes meos, ut custodiam verba tua. (Ib.) Legem tuam in medio cordis mei. (Ps. xxxix, 9.) Docebo iniquos vias tuas. (Ps. i, 15.)

Almost all the psalms are full of holy petitions. How many beautiful prayers are there in the Fiftieth Psalm? "Miserere mei Deus, secundum magnam misericordiam tuam. Averte faciem tuam a peccatis meis. Cor mundum crea in me Deus. Ne projicias me a facia tua. Spiritu principali confirma me." How many petitions in the Hundred and Eighteenth Psalm which is recited every day in the Little Hours? "Doce me justificationes tuas. Revela oculos meos. Viam iniquitatis amove a me. Averte oculos meos ne videant vanitatem. Da mihi intellectum ut discam mandata tua. Fiat misericordia tua ut consoletur me. Non confundas me ab expectatione mea. Adjuva me et salvus ero. Suscipe servum tuum in bonum. Aspice in me et miserere mei. Intellectum da mihi et vivam. Gressus meos dirige secundum eloquium tuum. Clamavi ad te salvum me fac, ut custodiam mandata tua. Vide humilitatem meam, et eripe me. Intret postulatio mea in conspectu tuo. Tuus sum ego, salvum me fac. Fiat manus tua, ut salvet me. —Doce me facere voluntatem tuam." (cxlii, 9.)

The prayers which are most pleasing to God, are the petitions of the *Pater Noster;* which is the most excellent of all prayers, and which Jesus Christ has taught us by his own mouth. Hence the holy Church prescribes the frequent repetition of it in the office. How beautiful are the first three petitions, which are, at the same time, most perfect acts of love: "Sanctificetur nomen tuum; adveniat regnum tuum; fiat voluntas tua sicut in cœlo et in terra." In the first, "Sanctificetur nomen tuum," we implore of God to make all men know and love him. In the second, "adveniat regnum tuum," we ask him to take possession of our whole hearts, reigning in them

here by his grace, and hereafter by glory. In the third, "fiat voluntas tua," &c., we ask the gift of perfect conformity, so as to do his will on earth as the saints do it in heaven. In repeating the *Gloria Patri* so often, how many devout affections may we excite of faith, of praise, of thanksgiving, and of complacency in the felicity and perfections of God? St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi imagined every time she said the *Gloria Patri*, that in bowing her head she offered it to the executioner in honor of the faith. The holy Church also commands us in the beginning of each of the Hours of the Office, to salute and invoke Mary the Mother of God. How many graces may we, then, obtain through the intercession of her who is the treasurer and dispenser of all the divine mercies?

The Breviary is full of *encouragement.* We have therein the writings and example of saints who had once been great sinners; for instance, King David, St. Matthew, St. Paul, St. Augustine, etc.

The Breviary is a petition composed by God himself by means of which we can obtain whatever we desire. "A hundred private prayers," says St. Alphonsus, "are not of so much value as a single prayer of the breviary." (Spouse of Christ, 2.) "Strive, therefore, as much as possible," says St. Lawrence Justinian, "to praise God worthily. 'Sacrificio laudis honorabis me.' You can thereby atone for your sins; you can appease your offended Judge; you can thank God for his innumerable benefits; you can give pleasure to the beloved Spouse of your soul; you can adorn your soul created in God's own image; you can imitate the angels and resemble the saints; you can dwell in heaven and avoid

the snares of this earth; you will thereby conquer the wicked enemy, obtain every grace and finally enter the joys of heaven." (De Eush.)

Manner of reciting the Breviary.

To say the Breviary with fruit we must, first of all, love and esteem it. We must lay aside every prejudice and look upon it, not as a burden, but as a pleasure. To gain a great love and esteem for the divine office, it is advisable to read occasionally some good book on the subject, and especially to study the psalms and the hymns. The better we understand them, the more attentively we pray, the more consolation we find in the Breviary. "I will not assert," says St. Alphonsus, "that the priest is obliged to study and to understand the meaning of all the obscure passages, but I do say that such a study is one of the most devout and useful that can occupy the priest."

One day, while in choir, the Blessed Hermann beheld the angels, with censers in their hands, offering to God as sweet incense, the prayers of the religious. That our prayers too may ascend as sweet incense to the throne of God, we must recite the office as the Church requires, "*digne*, *attente*, et *devote*." "*Digne*." We must pronounce every word correctly.

When you are about to begin saying your office, remember that you are going to speak to God about your own welfare, and that of the whole church; and remember that he, then, regards you with special love, and that his ears are more open than at other times, to the petitions which you then present.

At the beginning of the Office, offer to his honor, the praises which you are going to recite, and beg of him to

deliver you from distractions, and to give you light and aid to praise him, and to pray to him as you ought; and for this purpose, recite with great attention, the usual prayer: "Aperi Domine, os meum ad benedicendum," &c. In beginning the Office be not, as some are, in a hurry to finish it as soon as possible. Would to God they were not the greater number! Oh! my God! we undertake the labor, we say the Office; and will we, in order to save the little additional time necessary for the devout recitation of it, give displeasure to you, and lose the graces and merits which we may gain by reciting the Office with the requisite attention?

We should also recite the Office in a decent and modest posture. If we will not say it kneeling, or standing, let us, at least, be careful to recite it sitting in a becoming posture. It is related, that while two religious recited matins in a reclining posture, a devil appeared, caused an intolerable stench, and through mockery said: To the prayer which you offer, such incense is suited: "Ad talem orationem tale debetur incensum." (Jordan de Saxon. in vit. erem. lib. 2, cap. 15.)

"*Attente.*" We must not give way to wilful distractions: "Magna abusio est," says St. Bernard, "habere os in choro, cor in foro."

O how plainly God speaks to our hearts when we say the Breviary with attention. "Beatus qui in lege Domini meditatur." "In matutinis meditabor in te," etc. Here God reminds us of the great importance of making our meditation every morning. "Domum tuam decet sanctitudo." Here God exhorts us to keep everything clean and decent in the house of God—the chalice, the pyx, the corporal, the altar linen, the communion-cloth,

etc., and especially to keep our own hearts pure by prayer, self-denial and frequent confession.

If you wish to draw great fruit from the Office, be careful, in reciting the psalms, to renew your attention and affections from time to time, that your devotion, which gradually grows cold unless frequent efforts be made to inflame it, may not be entirely extinguished. "Ne quod tepescere cœperat," says St. Augustine, "omnino frigescat, et penitus extinguatur, nisi crebrius inflammetur." (Ep. 130, ad Probam c 9.)

You are already aware that there are three kinds of attention with which the Office may be recited I speak here of internal attention, for with regard to external attention, we must abstain from every action which is incompatible with internal attention, such as writing, speaking to others, or intentionally listening to them, and all similar occupations which require much application of the mind. It is also necessary to remark, that, according to theologians, they who recite the Office in the street, or in any other distracting place, are in great danger of not fulfilling their obligation. Theologians, with St. Thomas, teach that there may be three sorts of internal attention, namely: to the words, to the sense, and to God. "Triplex est attentio," says the holy doctor, "quæ orationi vocali potest adhiberi una quidem qua attenditur ad verba, ne aliquis in eis erret: secunda qua attenditur ad sensum verborum: tertia qua attenditur ad finem orationis, scilicet ad Deum et ad rem pro qua oratur." (2, 2, q. 83, a. 3.)

The first is attention to the words, by which a person takes care to pronounce all the words and syllables distinctly. The second is attention to the sense, and con-

sists in attending to the signification of the words, in order to unite with it the affections of the heart. The third, which is the most perfect, is attention to God, and consists in directing the mind to God during prayer, by acts of adoration, thanksgiving, or love ; or by petitions for his graces. The first sort of attention, if from the beginning there has been an intention of praying, is sufficient to fulfil the obligation of the Office; for, as St. Thomas teaches in another place, the Church requires nothing more. "Prima," says the holy doctor, "est attentio ad verba quibus petimus: deinde ad petitionem ipsam: et quæcumque earum attentionum adsit, non est reputanda inattenta oratio." (In 4, dist. 15, qu. 1, solut. 5.) But he who says the Office barely with attention to the words, without any attention to the sense, or to God, will never say it with devotion, nor with much fruit, nor without many defects. What fruit can the priest draw from the Office who attends only to the recitation of it with the tongue; and who, like a man oppressed by a heavy load, or like a person who does violence to himself in order to swallow a nauseous draught, seeks to finish it as soon as he can in order to get rid of the burden?

Oh! how great is the perversity of many ecclesiastics! they prolong their sleep ; they lengthen their meals, their recreations, their conversations, even their games and veriest trifles ; but they hurry the service of the Lord with all possible speed and finish it with disgraceful haste.

It would be still worse, if, while he is engaged in reciting the Office, he allows himself to be dissipated, or to look about at distracting objects, or to speak occasionally to others. St. Bonaventure relates, (Spec. disc. part. 1, c 16,) that in Paris, while a good priest was saying the

Office, a prelate asked a question regarding a certain matter. In reply, the priest said that he was speaking to a more exalted personage, and that, therefore, he could not, then, give him the information he wanted; and bowing down his head, he continued to recite the Office. The same saint also relates, in the same place, that another ecclesiastic was condemned to a severe purgatory, in punishment of interruptions in the Office.

I do not say that we should be disturbed, or afflicted at the involuntary distractions which molest us during the Office. As long as they are not voluntary, they are not sinful. The Lord compassionates our weakness: distracting thoughts often enter the mind without any fault on our part, and, therefore, they cannot hinder the fruit of the prayer which we present. "In spiritu et in veritate," says the angelic doctor, "qui ex instinctu spiritus ad orandum accedit, etiamsi ex infirmitate aliqua mens postmodum evagetur." (2. 2, qu. 83, a. 4, ad 1.) He adds, that even souls, wrapped in contemplation, cannot remain long on high, but are brought down, by the weight of human misery, to the state of involuntary distractions: "Mens humana diu stare in alto non potest: pondere enim infirmitatis humanæ deprimitur ad inferiora. Et ideo contingit quod, cum mens orantis ascendit in Deum per contemplationem, subito evagetur." (Loco. cit. ad 2.)

On the other hand, the holy doctor says, that he who is voluntarily distracted during the time of prayer, can neither be excused from sin, nor derive fruit from his prayers: "Si quis ex proposito in oratione mente evagatur, hoc peccatum est et impedit orationis fructum." (Ibid. ad 3.) The words *ex proposito*, as theologians commonly say, mean when a person adverts that he is distract-

ed, and voluntarily continues distracted. Against wilful distractions, St. Cyprian exclaims and says that it is an intolerable disrespect in the eyes of God to think of other things during prayer, as if anything were of greater importance than to converse with God in order to implore his graces: "Quæ segnitia est alienari, cum Dominum præcaris, quasi sit aliud quod debeas magis, cogitare quam cum Deo loquaris?" (De orat. Dom.) Hence St. Bernard has written: "Voluntas neglecta facit cogitationes indignas Deo: pia efficaces ad fructum spiritus." As the will gives efficacy to our prayers to obtain spiritual fruits, so voluntary negligence renders them unworthy of God, and therefore deserving, not of favors, but of chastisements.

"*Devote*," with mind and heart.

Dearly beloved priest, when you take the Breviary in your hand, imagine that an angel stands on one side, to register your merits in the book of life, if you say the Office with devotion: and on the other hand, a devil, who, if you recite it with distraction, writes your faults in the book of death. With this thought, excite yourself to say the Office with the greatest possible devotion. Endeavor, then, not only at the beginning of the Office, but also at the beginning of each psalm, to renew your attention, that you may be able to recite in your heart all the sentiments which you shall read. "Cum oratis Deum," says Cassian, "hoc versetur in corde quod profertur in ore." (Coll. 25, cap. 7.) Hence, St. Augustine says: "Si psalmus orat, orate: si gemit, gemite, si sperat, sperate." (In Ps. 30.) The angelic doctor has remarked that pious words, uttered with the lips, excite devotion in the soul: "Verba significantia aliquid ad devotionem pertinens, excitant mentes." (2, 2, q. 83, art.

12, ad 2.) He means that God has taught us to pray in words, that in reciting our prayers, we may apply the mind to ask what we pronounce with the tongue. This is what we find in the celebrated Canon (Dolentes) of the Fifth Council of Lateran, in which it is prescribed that the Office be recited "*studiose et devote quantum Deus dederit:*" "*studiose,*" by pronouncing the words distinctly: "*devote,*" by uniting the heart with the sentiments expressed. We must be persuaded of the truth of what St. Augustine says, namely: that we obtain the graces which we desire for ourselves and for others, more by the groans of the heart than by the words of the mouth: "Hoc negotium plus gemitibus quam sermonibus agitur." (Ad Probam. Ep. 122, c. 10.)

Oh! what a multitude of lights and graces are received from the psalms, when they are said with the proper pauses and attention! "Psalmus," says St. Epiphanius, "mentes illuminat, in cœlum reducit, homines familiares Deo reddit, animam lætificat." (Tom. 1, pag. 54.) The psalm illumines the mind, delights the soul, directs it to heaven, and renders it the friend of God.

It will contribute greatly to devotion in reciting the Office, to remain before the images of Jesus crucified, and of the Blessed Virgin Mary, that by occasionally looking at them, we may be able to renew our intention, and to excite devout affections.

"Oh! if all priests and religious said the Office devoutly the Church would not be in the sad state in which we see it. How many sinners would be rescued from the slavery of the devil? how many souls would love God with greater fervor? If they said the Office devoutly, priests themselves would not be always the same—always

imperfect, prone to anger, greedy, attached to self-interest, and to vanities. The Lord has promised to hear every one who prays to him: 'Omnis enim qui petit, accipit.' (Luc. xi, 10.) How, then, does it happen that certain priests say a thousand prayers every day in the divine Office which they recite, and that they are never heard? that they are always so weak, and so prone to relapse, not only into light faults (which they commit habitually, without sorrow for them, and without any effort to correct them), but also into grievous transgressions against charity, and other virtues? Miserable men! in reciting the Hours they pronounce a malediction against themselves when they say: 'Maledicti qui declinant a mandatis tuis.' And what is worse, such priests feel but little remorse for their sins, and excuse themselves, saying that they, too, are flesh like all others, and that they cannot restrain their passions. But if they recited the Office with devotion and recollection, uniting the affections of the heart with so many petitions which they present to God, they would certainly not be so weak as they are, but would acquire fervor and strength to resist all temptations, and to lead a life worthy of priests." (Selva.)

"Well hath Isaias prophesied of you, saying: This people honoreth me with their lips: but their heart is far from me." (Matt. xv, 8.) In these words our Saviour gives us to understand that a prayer which proceeds not from the heart, or which is not devout and fervent, is not heard by his heavenly Father. There are many priests who recite the divine office without thinking of what they say. Should they be required to tell what they asked of our Lord, they would be at a loss for an answer. The prayers of such priests are quite powerless with God. One

"Our Father," said with fervor is better and obtains more from God than the entire divine office recited a dozen times in a careless manner.

St. Bernard once saw how an angel of the Lord wrote down in a book the divine praises of each of his brethren when they were reciting the divine Office; some were written in letters of gold to express the devotion and fervor with which they were recited; others in letters of silver on account of the pure intention with which they were performed; others were written with ink to signify that they were said by way of routine and in a slothful manner; others, again, were written with water-color to indicate that they had been performed with great lukewarmness and without devotion or fervor.

The divine praises of some of St. Bernard's brethren were not written down at all; but instead of the chanted psalms, the following words were written: "This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me," (Isa. xxix, 13), to signify that the angel of the Lord was much displeased with this kind of prayer.

Holy angels! show us once your book, that we may see in what colors the prayers of so many priests are written down. There is good reason to fear that the prayers of many are written down in letters of ink, others in water-color, and the greater number of them, I fear, are not written down at all; so that the devil himself must rejoice and laugh at them.

The Lord has said, by the prophet Malachy, that he curses the praises offered by priests who bless him only with the tongue, while their heart is occupied, not in giving him honor and glory, but in attending to other things. "And now, O ye priests, this commandment is

to you. . .If you will not lay it to heart, to give glory to my name, saith the Lord of Hosts. . .I will curse your blessings." (Mal. ii, 1, 2.) Hence, on the miserable priest who says the office with such distraction and irreverence, shall fall the malediction pronounced by the psalmist: "May the devil stand at his right hand. When he is judged may he go out condemned: and may his prayer be turned to sin." (Ps. cviii, 6, 7.) When a priest recites the divine praises, muttering or mutilating the words, and with a mind wilfully distracted with the affairs of the world and earthly pleasures, then the devil stands at his right hand; his reward for such an Office shall be his eternal condemnation, since his very prayer is imputed to him as a sin, on account of the unworthy manner in which he has said it. This is precisely the meaning of the words: *and may his prayer be turned to sin.*

Hence, while we recite the Office, the devil endeavors, with all his might, to place before the eyes of the mind, so many objects, desires, and thoughts of the world, that being occupied with them, we may lose all the fruit which we might draw from the office, and render ourselves guilty before God by the disrespect with which we treat him. Hence, we should make every effort to recite the divine praises with the proper attention. A wise religious used to say, that if it be necessary, we ought to abridge the time of mental prayer, in order to give more time to the Office, and recite it with suitable devotion. In the rules of the Carthusians we read: "Spiritus Sanctus gratum non recipit quidquid aliud quam quod debes, obtuleris, neglecto eo quod debes." (Statut. Carth. part. 3.) God does not accept any other devotion which you offer him, if you neglect that to which you are obliged.

Objections.

"Many priests," says St. Alphonsus, "consider and call the obligation of the divine Office a great burden, and I say that they who say it with irreverence, without devotion, and with an eagerness to finish it, have just reason to call the Office a heavy burden; for they have to toil at least for an hour in reciting it without relish, and with great pain. But to good priests who say it with devotion, tasting so many sentiments of devotion, which are there expressed, and exciting in the heart the holy affections and petitions which are there presented to God, the office is not a burden but a source of spiritual comfort and delight; and should it ever be called a burden, it is the burden which raises and unites us to God."

There are other priests who say that they can hardly find time to say the Breviary. Hence a certain clergyman once requested Pius VI. to dispense him from the Breviary. "Have you then more to do than I?" asked the Pope; "and yet I say my Office every day."

Those who say the *Little Hours* after morning prayer, or as early in the morning as possible; *Vespers and Compline* immediately after recreation or dinner; *Matins and Lauds* of the following day in the evening, as soon as the time prescribed has begun, will have time for everything; they find that things seem to fall naturally into order.

"I do not wish," says a priest, "to condemn the Breviary. I think it is all well enough for those who have nothing else to do; but you see, I have so much to attend to; I have sick calls, confessions, sermons and the

schools to attend to. I think it would be well if the Breviary were shortened, or if I could be dispensed from it altogether, at least when I am busy."

You are willing to bear all the burden of sick calls; you are willing to sit for hours in the confessional, you are willing to wear yourself out in preaching; surely then you can do that which is easier—spend an hour or so in prayer, prayer for yourself and your flock. Only bear in mind that your prayer is just as necessary for the people as your preaching. "Nunc lege, nunc ora, nunc cum fervore labora. Sic erit tibi hora, et labor ipse brevis."

There is another good priest. He says: "There are so many passages in the Breviary the meaning of which I cannot understand; what merit can there be in reciting such passages?"

The mocking bird sings not for itself alone, nor for man alone. It sings also for God, who created it to sing. It sings on, even though it cannot understand the meaning of its own melody. So it is with the priest who recites the divine Office. Even though he may not understand the full meaning of every psalm he recites, yet it is certain that God understands it. The act of obedience, the good intention, the honest effort, the loving and docile heart of the good priest are most pleasing to God.

"What you say," continues the priest, "is all well enough; but several facts related in the Breviary are often so incredible."

The Church in doubtful matter is usually very careful to add the words: "Ut fertur." It is easier to criticise the Breviary than to disprove its carefully selected documents. "To criticise and to condemn that which is

approved by the whole Church," says St. Augustine, "is the height of pride and folly."

There is another. He says:

"You seem to think that I do not like to pray or to read good books. I assure you, you judge me rashly. I say my prayers every morning and night. I am fond of study. I read a little every day in some good book. I know full well that the priest must be a man of prayer. But I am opposed to long, tiresome prayers. I hate tedious repetitions, and this continual fumbling through the leaves of the Breviary, looking here for a psalm, there for an antiphon, somewhere else for a versicle or a prayer—all this certainly does not promote recollection and piety."

I know that you are a man of prayer, that you are fond of good reading, but it seems to me that our wise mother the Church has taken special account of our weakness in composing the Breviary. Many a time when we are very busy with temporal affairs, we are apt to forget prayer. But our mother the Church knows that prayer is absolutely necessary for us. She therefore uses a holy violence and compels us to pray at certain times. Our Lord says: "Compelle intrare." Many a time again we would like to pray, but we are too distracted; our mind is so dull, our heart is so cold. Now in the Breviary the Church places the right words on our lips, the right thoughts in our mind and suggests the proper affections for our heart.

The Breviary may be compared to a grand orchestra, where every instrument is heard in its proper place. It corresponds so well to our ever-changeful character. Now there are words of joy and anon words of sorrow.

Now we make acts of hope and again acts of contrition. Now we make acts of love and again we pray to be delivered from our enemies. Now we read a portion of Holy Writ, at another time the writings of the Fathers of the Church, and again the life of some saint who shows us the way to heaven, and who seems to say to us: "If I have conquered, why cannot you?" Again we read some stirring hymn, and again some short but expressive prayer. The antiphons and versicles serve to recall our wandering thoughts. They are like the condiments we use at table to give zest to our food.

We preach to the people that they must pray often, pray without ceasing. If we do not pray often ourselves, if we do not practise what we preach, do we not act the part of the Pharisees?

We preach to the people that they must keep the commandments of the Church; that they must hear Mass, support the pastor, etc. And we—are we not also obliged to obey the Church, to recite the Office as the Church commands and as we solemnly promised to do on the day of our ordination?

One day St. Gertrude was saying the divine Office with more than usual fervor and devotion, on the feast of a saint. Each word she uttered appeared to dart like an arrow from her heart into the Heart of Jesus, which it deeply penetrated and filled with ineffable satisfaction. From one end of these arrows rays of light shot forth like stars, which seemed to fall on all the saints, but especially on the one whose festival was celebrated. From the lower end of the arrows drops of dew flowed forth, which fertilized the souls of the living and refreshed the souls in purgatory. (Life and Revel. of St. Gertrude, chap. xxii.)

CHAPTER XI.

Moral Necessity of the Intercession of Mary.

We have said in the first chapter, Part I, "that God decreed from all eternity to create the world as a dwelling-place for men where, by a holy life, they should gain an eternal reward; that God foresaw from all eternity that men would not live up to this end of their creation; that consequently God would have been frustrated in his design had he not decreed from all eternity the Incarnation for the redemption of the human race." By decreeing the Incarnation God also decreed the creation of the Mother of the Redeemer for the same purpose. It was, therefore, principally for the sake of the Redeemer and his Mother that the world was created; for they were to come into this world for the justification and glorification of men, which was to be operated through Jesus Christ and his Mother. "Ordo enim naturæ creatus est et institutus propter ordinem gratiæ," says St. Thomas Aquinas. The principal end of the creation of the universe, I say, is Christ and his Mother, and secondly, that the elect may receive here below the grace of God through Christ and his Mother. Although it is true that the world existed before the Redeemer and his Mother appeared in it, yet in the plan of creation and redemption Jesus Christ and his Mother are prior to the world. On this account St. Paul calls Jesus Christ "the beginning, *the first born from the dead*, that in all

things he may hold the primacy : because in him it hath well pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, making peace through the blood of the cross both as to the things on earth and the things that are in heaven." (Col. i, 18, 20.)

In like manner the holy Church applies to the Blessed Virgin the words of Ecclesiasticus : "Ego ex ore Altissimi prodivi, primogenita ante omnem creaturam. Ego feci in cœlis, ut oriretur lumen indeficiens." (C. xxiv, 5, 6.) She gave to the world that never-failing light, Christ, the Sun of justice, and through him the light of faith. "Et qui creavit me, requievit in tabernaculo meo." (Ibid. v, 12.)

The Rabbi of old, too, used to call the Mother of the Messiah "*primum hominem*," so that all the rest of men could be called her children.

I say "first man;" of course, not by creation and time, but by dignity, by predestination, and by the decrees of God and on account of her destiny. Hence St. Bernard (Serm. I in Salve Regina) says : "For her sake every Scripture was made; for her sake the whole world was created; and she is the one that is full of grace; and through her man was redeemed. *Verbum caro factum, Deus humilis, et homo sublimis.*" God created her as a world apart for himself.

In the revelations of St. Bridget, (In serm. angel. c. 5,) we read as follows : "When the visible world was created, there was still existing, in the mind of God, another less world with all its beauty and splendor, which was still to be created, and this world was the Blessed Virgin. From this world was to come greater

glory for God, greater joy for the angels, and greater blessings for all those men who wished to apply to her goodness than there should come from the vast world you live in." It is, indeed, with truth that the Blessed Virgin, in this revelation, is called "a less world," because she carried, in her sacred womb, God himself in whom all things are contained, and because, according to St. Bonaventure (In Spec. B. Virg. c. 6,) "Whatever, after God, is most beautiful, most sweet and most attractive in glory, is found in Mary and through Mary." Truly, he who is mighty, has done great things in her and for her. "Fecit mihi manga, qui potens est. Fecit potentiam in brachio suo."

There is, therefore, a certain intimate union between the creation of the world and the nativity of Christ and his Blessed Mother. God did not wish that Christ and the Blessed Virgin should be born except in this world; and again he did not wish that this world should exist without Jesus Christ and his Mother; nay, it was chiefly for their sake, as we have said, that God created the world; and for their sake he has preserved it and shall continue to preserve it to the end of time. God has decreed to institute through them the order of grace, that is, the order of the justification and glorification of the elect.

The Blessed Virgin, then, is the tabernacle in which God concealed the created wisdom, nay, the uncreated and incarnate wisdom itself. It was in her that the Son of God was conceived and made man and dwelt for nine months; so that, if we call him our Redeemer from all eternity, we may also, with great propriety, call his Blessed Mother our Redemptrix, that is, an instrument or *perpet-*

ual Help in the work of our redemption, and in the whole order of grace wrought and instituted by Jesus Christ.

It is impossible carefully to study the history of Jesus and Mary, as recorded by the evangelists, without perceiving a uniform law of Providence, uniting them in the great events of their lives, and exhibiting her as a co-operating instrument in the mission of her divine Son, the Redemption of mankind, and as recognized by him in this intimate relation. (See Vol. " Greatest Com. p. 644-659.)

The work which the Redeemer began in his Incarnation and completed in his Passion was not yet firmly established and secured, his Kingdom was not to come all at once, nor his dominion to be immediately established on the ruins of the empire of evil. The number of the elect must be gathered from all nations and generations of men. The merits of his Passion must be applied to the souls he has redeemed through all succeeding ages. This great mission is carried on through his Church which, at Pentecost, came forth in the power of the Holy Spirit. Through her our Lord continues to act in the accomplishment of his designs. Now, does Mary still co-operate with him? Is her influence felt together with his as it was of old? Is she still associated with him in the continuation and completion of his work of redemption as she was in the beginning of it?

Whoever considers calmly the whole course of the life of the Blessed Virgin and observes its invariable bearing on the great events of her Son's ministry and its uniform connection with it, cannot doubt that her influence and co-operation are designed to last to the end of

time. They are extended too far during her life on earth to make any other conclusions probable.

If Christ had merely been born of her, and reared by her fostering care, and had then left her to accomplish his mission; if the veil had closed upon her history at Nazareth and no further mention had been made in his life: there would even then have been cause enough to deem it probable that more had occurred than had been recorded, and that the term of his childhood was not the end of her union and co-operation with him. But with the additional imformation about his maturer years given by the evangelists; with the knowledge that he chose to be subject to her till he was thirty years of age; that he allowed himself, as it were, to be constrained by her intercession to work his first miracle; that he drew her again to his side and disposed events so as to console her in the time of his agony; and finally, with the recollection that the last time she is mentioned in Holy Scripture, it is in the august society of the eleven apostles: it is impossible to think that her share in the work which brought her divine Son from heaven, is at an end, or that the extension of her influence could have any other termination than the conclusion of the vast undertaking whose beginning depended on her consent.

The prophecy spoken by God to the deceiver of our race, also points to the union of the woman and her seed in their hostility to the devil and his seed. The devil and his seed are inseparable enemies of the woman and her seed. By parity of conclusion, therefore, the woman and her seed must also be inseparable. Even the variety of expression, "She shall bruise," or "it shall bruise thy head," illustrates the identity of operation that unites

the woman of prophecy and her seed. The woman is to triumph in her seed, and neither her seed nor his triumph is to be without her co-operation. As long as the deceiver and his seed are not destroyed, it is clear that the woman and her seed must co-exist as the divinely appointed agents of that destruction. The first words of the prediction admit of no equivocal interpretation. "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed." As long as hostility is possible between sin and holiness, between God and the devil, so long must Mary and her Son co-operate in sustaining the hostility, in pushing it to extremity and finally in destroying its objects. The only term of her influence and united action is the term of which St. Paul speaks when he says: "Afterwards the end, when Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to God and the Father, when he shall have brought to nought all principality and all authority and power, and the enemy, death shall be destroyed." (1 Cor. xv, 24, 26.)

Hence it is that the Church has always regarded Mary's influence as powerfully affecting her own destiny. She does not assign to the Blessed Virgin a merely historical position in the Christian religion; she does not regard her as one who has merited great honor only as the author of Christ's being in time. Mary is regarded by the Church as the centre of a living energy; as exercising a protecting and fostering care over the representative of her Son on earth. Her position of superintendence over the destinies of the Church is the divine appointment of Christ himself, who chose to be subject to her during thirty years of his life; it is the reward of her singular conformity to the will of his heavenly Father. The

Church, therefore, believes that Mary's patronage is just as much consistent with the supreme majesty of God as was the subjection of that very God to her while he lived on earth. God willed it to be so then as he wills it now that Mary should co-operate with him in the care of his Church. Now, if it is his will, who can call it in question, or who can suggest an arrangement more in harmony with his revealed word, or one which redounds more to his sovereign honor?

But what need is there of Mary's interposition at the present day? Does it not seem to disparage the power and mercy of God? The need of her interposition is neither less nor greater than it was in the beginning of the Church. God so willed it *then* that the Incarnation should, in a measure, depend on her. If he still wills that the full accomplishment of all the results of the Incarnation should, in part at least, depend on her, then her interposition is still needful. The disparagement to his mercy and power is not greater now than it was then. Mary was created by his power as the chief instrument of his mercy. All that her influence now accomplishes and all that it shall obtain till the end of the world, is therefore due to his infinite and omnipotent goodness as to its first cause.

We read in Holy Scripture that as soon as "Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost." (Luke, i, 41.) Mary had then conceived the Holy One. Her chaste womb then embraced him who is the source of all grace. She was, therefore, at that moment, the treasury of grace. Through her, grace flowed in a plentiful stream upon all who approached her. Hence has risen the

universal opinion that she has become, from that moment, the great channel of grace to the Church, sending along its blessed stream from the fountain-head which is God to refresh and fructify the garden of the Lord. As sin came into the world through Eve, so grace came through Mary, with Jesus Christ who was born of her and ever remains her Son.

Sin would not have entered the world, had Eve not listened to the serpent and furthered his wicked designs by her wilful co-operation. In like manner, had Mary not listened favorably to the angel, and thus co-operated with God in the work of the Incarnation, Christ would not have been born of her; the fountain of grace would have remained sealed. He who gave his Son to the world through the agency of Mary, has with him given all things to the world through her. If, therefore, we believe that Jesus Christ came to us through Mary, we should also believe that the graces which he merited for us must come to us through his Mother. If we believe that Mary was a help in our redemption, we should also believe that she is a help in our sanctification. If we believe that without her, we were not redeemed, we should also believe that without her we shall not be saved. If we believe that without Mary we would not have a Redeemer to open heaven to us, we should also believe that without Mary's assistance we cannot obtain heaven. If we believe that the Redeemer came to us through Mary we should also believe that it is through Mary that we must come to behold the Redeemer in his heavenly glory.

If we believe in the beautiful order of nature, we must also believe in the order of grace: or to speak more plain-

ly, if we believe that God wished that Mary should be his own Mother, we must also believe that she should be our Mother, not by name only, but in very deed; that she should be looked upon and honored as the perpetual help or intercessor for the welfare of the whole world—the help of sinners to obtain for them the grace of conversion, and the help of the just to obtain for them the grace to advance and persevere in justice and holiness of life.

From what has been said we draw with St. Alphonsus and other saints the conclusion that the invocation of the Blessed Virgin Mary is not only useful, but even necessary for our salvation; necessary, not indeed absolutely, but morally. This necessity arises from the will of God who has ordained, says St. Bernard, that all graces should come to us through Mary. This is the common doctrine of doctors and theologians of the Church—a doctrine entirely in conformity with the sentiments of the Church.

The Church honors the Blessed Virgin with special reverence. She offers the "cultus of hyperdulia," a reverence far surpassing the honor she pays to the other saints and even to the highest angels. "Debetur Beatæ Virgini," says St. Thomas, "veneratio duliæ eminentius tamen quam cæteris creaturis,in quantum ipsa est Mater Dei. Inde dicitur quod debetur ei non qualiscunque dulia, sed hyperdulia." (3. Quest. 25, a. 5.) The same saint says elsewhere: "Beata virgo ex hoc quod est mater Dei habet quandam dignitatem infinitam ex bono infinito quod est Deus." (1. Qu. 25, a. 6.)

The Church displays everywhere in her *liturgy* this special reverence for the Blessed Virgin. The rubrics require that the priest must *bow his head every time* her name is mentioned; he must even show greater reverence than when the name of any other saint is mentioned.

The Church has approved the *litany* of the Blessed Virgin which contains so many glorious titles of this Blessed Mother.

In the Litany of the Saints the *name* of the Blessed Virgin immediately *follows* that of the Holy Trinity and precedes all the other saints, precedes even the highest angels.

The *divine office* is always preceded by the Hail Mary and followed by an antiphon in her honor.

In the *suffragia* the Blessed Virgin has again the first place.

Every Saturday is specially consecrated to the honor of the Blessed Virgin.

During the year there are several feasts in her honor celebrated in the most solemn manner, and some of them are to be kept holy like Sundays.

Three times a day the Church publicly invokes the Blessed Virgin by the beautiful devotion of the *Angelus*.

In every Church there is an *altar* erected in honor of the Blessed Mother of God.

The Church invokes the Blessed Virgin as the "Mother of mercy, our Life, our Sweetness and our Hope." She entreats the Blessed Mother of God to avert every evil, to ask for every blessing. "Mala nostra pelle, bona cuncta posce."

While hanging on the cross our dear Lord recommended to his Blessed Mother the beloved disciple. "Ecce filius tuus." And not St. John alone, every priest especially, every true disciple of Jesus became at that moment the adopted child of Mary.

Why did our Lord, who loved his Mother so dearly, suffer her to remain so long on earth after his ascension?

"Volo," he says, "ut, ubi ego sum, illic et sit minister meus." Why then did not his dearest servant, his own fond Mother ascend with him to heaven? Ah! it was on our account. On our account he came down from heaven: "Propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem;" and on our account, too, he left his Blessed Mother so long on earth. "I will not leave you orphans," he says to his Apostles and to his priests. "I go to prepare a place for you;" but meanwhile I leave you in charge of my loving Mother: "Ecce mater tua."

The earth is indeed a place of exile for Mary, but the Church is in its infancy and needs a Mother! The Blessed Virgin remains on earth to encourage all, but especially the Apostles by her presence and by her example. She remains to teach the Apostles and evangelists so many of those beautiful and consoling truths that we find in the Gospel. And now that she has been taken, body and soul, to heaven, she there intercedes constantly for the welfare of the Church.

The Blessed Virgin has ever been the advocate and protector of the Church in her struggles with tyranny and heresy. "Cunctas hereses sola interemisti in universo mundo." She is the chosen one foretold by God himself in the garden of Eden. "Ipsa conteret caput tuum." "Magnum est in quolibet sancto," says St. Thomas, "quando habet tantum de gratia quod sufficit ad salutem multorum. Sed quando haberet tantum quod sufficeret ad salutem omnium hominum, hoc esset maximum. Et hoc est in *Christo* et in *Beata Virgine*. Nam in omni periculo potes salutem obtinere ab ipsa Virgine gloriosa. Unde in Cantico: 'Mille clypei,' id est, remedia contra pericula, 'pendent ab ea.'"

But here a certain author remarks: "If all graces pass through Mary, then if we implore the intercession of other saints, they too must have recourse to the mediation of Mary to obtain for us the graces we ask through their intercession. This, however," he says, "no one believes, or has ever thought of."

"I reply," says St. Alphonsus, "that there can be no error or difficulty in believing this. As Almighty God has crowned his Mother as the queen of the saints, and ordained that all graces should be bestowed by her hands, what difficulty can there be in saying that God also, in order to honor his Mother, should also wish the saints to invoke her to obtain favors for their clients? To say that "no one ever thought of such a thing" is to show much ignorance; for St. Bernard, St. Anselm, St. Bonaventure, Father Suarez and others make this assertion. "In vain," says St. Bernard, "would any one pray to the other saints for a favor, if Mary did not intercede to obtain it for him." (Glories of Mary, Chapt. V.)

This being the case, the question of the moral necessity of Mary's intercession for our salvation and sanctification is evidently not one of mere theory, nor an abstract matter with which we have no practical concern; which may be accepted or not, indifferently; whose reception will do no good, or whose rejection will be harmless. If the whole tenor of our Lord's life, if the universal and immemorial practice of the Church, if the pious custom of millions of good Christians all coincide in attributing to the Mother of Jesus an uninterrupted fellowship with her Son in the great work of the Redemption and in everything that

tends to its final accomplishment, then the establishment of such a fact must impress every mind with the relative importance of availing ourselves of this divine institution of the intercession of the Blessed Mother of God.

CHAPTER XII.

The Confidence we ought to have in the Intercession of Mary on account of her Power and Mercy.

That Mary is our Mother we were told by Jesus himself when hanging on the cross: "Behold thy Mother." (John. xix, 27.) By his all-powerful word God created the heavens and the earth; by his word he changed water into wine at the wedding-feast; by his word he gave life to the dead; by his word he changed bread and wine into his own body and blood; and by the same word he made his own beloved Mother to be truly and really our Mother also. Mary, then, is our Mother, as Jesus willed and declared; and Mary, our Mother, is an all-powerful Mother; she is an all-merciful Mother.

God alone is all-powerful by nature, but Mary is all-powerful by her prayers. What more natural than this?

Mary is made *Mater Dei*, the Mother of God. Behold two words, the full meaning of which can never be comprehended either by men or angels. To be Mother of God is, as it were, an infinite dignity; for the dignity of that Mother is derived from the dignity of her Son. As there can be no son of greater excellence than the Son of God, so there can be no mother greater than the Mother of God. Hence St. Thomas asks whether God could make creatures nearer perfection than those already created, and he answers yes, he can, except three: that is,

1, The Incarnation of the Son of God; 2, The maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary; and 3, The everlasting beatitude; in other words, God can create numberless worlds, all different from one another in beauty, but he cannot make anything greater than the Incarnation of Christ, the Mother of God, and the happiness of the blessed in heaven. And why can he not? Because God himself is involved in and most intimately united to each of these works, and is their object. ("Hæc tria Deum involvunt et pro objecto habent.") As there can be no man as perfect as Christ, because he is a Man-God, and as there can be no greater happiness than the beatific vision and enjoyment and possession of God in heaven, where the soul is, as it were, transformed into God and most inseparably united to his nature, so also no mother can be made as perfect as the Mother of God. These three works are of a certain infinite dignity on account of their intimate union with God, the infinite Good. There can then be nothing better, greater than, or as perfect as, these three works, because there can be nothing better than God himself. The Blessed Virgin gave birth to Christ, who is the natural Son of God the Father, both as God and as man. Christ, then, as man, is the natural Son, both of the Blessed Virgin and of God the Father. Behold in what intimate relation she stands to the Blessed Trinity, she having brought forth the same Son whom God the Father has generated from all eternity.

Moreover, the Blessed Virgin is the Mother of God, who had no earthly father; she was both mother and father to Jesus Christ. Hence she is the Mother of God far more than others are the mothers of men; for

Christ received of the Blessed Virgin alone his whole human nature, and is indebted to his Mother for all that he is as man. Hence Christ, by being conceived and born of the Blessed Virgin, became in a certain sense her debtor, and is under more obligations to her for being to him both mother and father than other children are to their parents.

If Mary is the Mother of God, what wonder, then, that God has glorified and will glorify, through all ages, her power of intercession with him and her mercy for all men? The Eternal Father has chosen Mary to be the mother of his only Son; the Holy Spirit chose her as his spouse. The Son, who has promised a throne in heaven to the apostles who preached his word, is bound in justice to do more for the Mother who bore him, the eternal Word. If we believe in honoring our mother, surely he believes in honoring and glorifying his. Now, what honors, what prerogatives, should God bestow on her, whom he has so much favored, and who served him so devotedly! How should she be honored whom the King of Heaven deigns to honor!

A king was once in great danger of being assassinated, but a faithful subject discovered the plot, revealed it, and thus saved the monarch's life. The king was moved with gratitude, and asked his ministers, "How could he be honored whom the king desires to honor?" One of his ministers replied, "He whom the king desires to honor should be clad in kingly robes; he should be crowned with a kingly diadem, and the first of the royal princes should go before him and cry aloud, 'Thus shall he be honored whom the king desires to honor.'" In this manner did an earthly king reward him who saved his life.

And how should the King of heaven and earth reward her who gave him his human life? How should Jesus reward the loving Mother who bore him, nursed him, saved him in his infancy from a most cruel death? Is there any honor too high for her whom God himself has so much honored? Is there any glory too dazzling for her whom the God of glory has chosen for his dwelling-place? No; it is God's own decree: Let her be clad in royal robes. Let the fulness of the God-head so invest her, so possess her, that she shall be a spotless image of the sanctity, the beauty, the glory of God himself. Let her be crowned with a kingly diadem. Let her reign forever as the peerless Queen of heaven, of earth, and of hell. Let her reign as the Mother of mercy, the Consoler of the afflicted, the Refuge of sinners. Let the first of the royal princes walk before her. Let the angels, the prophets, the apostles, the martyrs, let all the saints, kiss the hem of her garment and rejoice in the honor of being the servants of the Mother of God.

No wonder, then, if we rarely hear of Mary but in connection with a miraculous demonstration of the power of God. She was conceived as no other human being ever was conceived. She again conceived her Son and God in a miraculous manner. Miracles attended her visit to her cousin St. Elizabeth. The birth of her divine Child was accompanied by many striking prodigies. When she carried him in her arms to present him in the temple, behold new miracles followed her steps. The first miracle of her divine Son was performed at her request. She took part in the awful mystery of the Passion. She shared in the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. In a word, miracles seem to have been the order

in her life, the absence of miracles the exception ; so that we are as little surprised to find them attend her everywhere as we should be astonished to hear of them in connection with ourselves. Mary was a living miracle. All that we know of her miraculous power now is but little when compared with the prodigies which were effected through her agency during her earthly career. She saluted her cousin Elizabeth ; and when that holy woman "heard her salutation, she was filled with the Holy Ghost." She addressed her divine Son at the marriage-feast, and said, "They have no more wine"; and immediately the filial charity which had bound him to her for thirty years constrained him to comply with her request. He whose meat and drink it was to do the will of his heavenly Father seemed to make the will of Mary the law of his action rather than his own. Again, there was a moment when the mystery of the Incarnation hung upon the word of her lips ; the destiny of the world depended upon an act of her will. When God wished to create the world, "He spoke and it was done"; when he wished to redeem the world, he left it to the consent of his creature, and that creature was Mary. She said, "Be it done to me according to thy word," and the miracle of all miracles, the mystery of all mysteries, was consummated. "God was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us."

It cannot surprise us, then, that she should continue to be a centre of miraculous action. Her whole previous history prepares us for this. It seems to be the law of her being ; she represents to us the most stupendous miracle that the world ever witnessed. It seems, therefore, almost natural that she should be able to suspend

here and there the course of natural events by the power of her intercession. All that we know of her miraculous power now is as nothing when compared with the prodigies which were effected through her agency during her earthly career, and which we must believe, unless we would forfeit the very name of Christian. The Apostles did not enter upon their office of intercession till the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost; after that, whatever they should ask the Father in Christ's name they were certain to receive. Mary began her office of intercession at Cana. Its commencement was inaugurated by Christ's first miracle. It is true that his answer, in words at least, seemed at first unfavorable. But only observe how every circumstance of that event strengthens the Catholic view of our Lord's conduct. Mary's faith in her Son's power, and in his willingness to grant her request, never wavered, even when he seemed to make a difficulty. Whether his words had a meaning wholly different from that ordinarily attached to them now, or whether she, whose heart was as his own, read his consent in the tone of his voice or in the glance of his eye, her only answer was the words addressed to the servants: "Whatever he shall say to you, do it," evidently proving that she never for an instant doubted the favorable issue of her request. Now, if what appeared to be an unseasonable exercise of Mary's influence resulted in a miracle, and the first of the public miracles of our Lord; and if he predicted the coming of an hour when the exercise of her influence should no longer be unseasonable, as his words clearly imply, what prodigies must not her intercession effect at the present time! If she could thus prevail with God in her lowliness, what

can she not obtain now in her exalted state! Number, if you can, those who, through the intercession of Mary, have been restored to life; how many sick have been cured; how many captives have been set at liberty; how many have been delivered by Mary who were in danger of perishing by fire, in danger of shipwreck, in danger of war and pestilence! Number all the kingdoms which she has founded; all the empires which she has preserved; to how many armies that put themselves under her protection has she not given victory over their enemies! Call to mind Narses, the general of the Emperor Justinian. Was it not through Mary that he gained the victory over the Goths? And was not the victory of Heraclius over the Persians due to Mary? Pelagius I. sought her aid, and slew 80,000 Saracens. Basil the Emperor defeated the Saracens by her assistance. By the same assistance Godfrey de Bouillon defeated the Saracens and regained Jerusalem. Through her Alfonsus VIII, King of Castile, slew 200,000 Moors, with the loss of scarcely twenty or thirty Christians. Pius V obtained through her intercession the celebrated victory over the Turks at Lepanto. How many heresies has she not crushed! It was she who animated St. Athanasius and St. Gregory Thaumaturgus to defend the Church against the Arians. It was she who animated St. Cyrillus to defend the doctrine of the Church against the Nestorians. It was she who inspired St. Augustine to raise his voice against the Pelagians. It was she who encouraged St. John Damascene to attack the fierce heresy of the Iconoclasts. It was she who animated St. Dominic to defend the doctrines of the Church against the Albigenses. It was she who filled

St. Ignatius Loyola with undaunted courage to battle against the baneful heresy of Luther. It was she who inspired St. Alphonsus de Liguori to take up arms against the poisonous serpents of Jansenism and Gallicanism. It is she who has inspired so many persons to consecrate themselves to the service of God in the religious and apostolic life.

These public manifestations of her power recorded in the history of the Church are indeed wonderful; but her secret influence—the influence which she exerts over the hearts of men, over human passions and motives of action, over the invisible enemies of our salvation—is even more wonderful, more comprehensive still. This influence is felt through the whole Church; it is of hourly occurrence. Those who have felt its gentle operation can bear witness to the truth of its existence. How many of the just have become perfect through Mary; how many there are who have received the grace of purity through her; how many there are who have obtained through her the grace to overcome their passions; how many who have already obtained through her the crown of life everlasting! Behold a St. Augustine, a St. John Damascene, a St. Germanus, a St. Anselm, a St. Bonaventure, a St. Bernard, a St. Dominic, a St. Vincent Ferrer, a St. Xavier, a St. Alphonsus; behold the countless multitude of saints who for their sanctity have shone like suns in the heavens. Was it not through Mary that they became holy? Have they passed through any other gate than through that opened by Mary? Think of all the sinners who have been converted through Mary. The hourly conversions of such numbers are the hourly triumphs of Mary's power; they are the secret but most conclusive evidence of the

queenly authority with which she is invested for the welfare of all men.

Nothing is too great for Mary's power. And as there is nothing too great for her power, so there is nothing too insignificant for her notice. While she fights the battles of the universal Church, she cares for the salvation of the least of Christ's little ones. She is always ready to console and refresh their fainting spirits, to procure for them even the smallest actual grace. From the holy virgin martyr who in the first ages of the Church invoked the aid of Mary against the demon of impurity to the youth who kneels to-day before her altar, imploring the preservation of his innocence or the restoration of lost virtue, it has never been heard that any one who fled to her protection, implored her assistance, or asked her prayers was left unheeded. One, for instance, sets his heart upon obtaining from the Blessed Virgin the recovery or conversion of a dear friend; another prays for the clear manifestation of the divine will in his regard at some critical period of his life; another prays for some special favor; they begin a novena to Mary, and ere it is ended their prayer is heard. In the daily strife with sin and temptation the name of Mary acts as a spell upon the spirits of evil. If men at times give way to pride and contempt of others, they invoke the aid of Mary, and their hearts become kind and humble. Does the thought of impurity cross their mind, they call upon her name; they raise their eyes towards her throne, and the demon flies from them. Whilst Mary, this loving Mother, was yet on earth, her heart was always full of mercy and compassion towards all men. Destined from all eternity to be the Mother of the God of mercy, Mary received a

heart like unto the heart of her divine Son Jesus—a heart that was free from every stain of sin and overflowing with burning charity. Indeed, Mary's mercy grew up with her from her tender childhood, and compassion became with her a second nature. She herself reveals the loving mercy that burns in her heart. In the little house at Nazareth, in her silent chamber, she is kneeling all alone. With more than seraphic ardor she implores God to send speedily the long-wished-for Redeemer. The angel enters and salutes Mary: "Hail, full of grace." He announces the glad tidings that God himself desires to call her "Mother," and waits for her answer. The whole human race sinful and sorrowful lies prostrate at her feet. God himself, the Creator of all things, awaits the free consent of his own creature. And now Mary reveals all her virtues, displays her unbounded mercy. The decisive moment has come; Mary becomes a mother, and remains a spotless virgin. She becomes the Queen of heaven, and remains the meek and lowly handmaid. She utters the merciful "*fiat*." It is for us that she utters it. "Be it done to me according to thy word." By the divine "*fiat*" this world was called out of nothingness into existence, and by the "*fiat*" of Mary this same world, dead in sin, was recalled to the life of grace. Well does Mary know what this consent will cost her; but her great love for us, her great mercy towards us sinners, impels her and she willingly offers herself to suffer sorrow and contempt, to endure every pang for our sake.

Behold once more this holy Virgin, full of divine grace and mercy, going in haste over the mountains of Judea. See how she undertakes a long and tedious journey of several days—and for what purpose? Her compassion-

ate heart knows that the infant John the Baptist lies bound by the chains of sin; she hastens to burst those fetters. No sooner has Mary arrived at the house of Elizabeth than the infant is freed from sin, is sanctified, and the compassionate Virgin sings a sublime canticle of praise and gladness.

The evangelist tells us in a few words the entire fulness of the mercy of Mary: "Mary, of whom was born Jesus." These few words contain such a superabundance of graces for us that we can think of nothing better, we can think of nothing greater. For Jesus is our most merciful Redeemer. He is mercy itself, and Mary is the Mother of Jesus—the Mother of mercy. The shepherds of Bethlehem can tell, and the wise men of the East can bear witness to the fact, that when they found the Child and its Mother in the poor and lowly stable, their joy, their happiness, their consolation, knew no bounds.

If we wish to see still more clearly how deeply the heart of Mary felt for our miseries, let us approach the temple and see Mary offer up her dearly-beloved Son for us. Yes, so dearly has Mary loved the world that she has sacrificed her only-begotten Son for the life of the world. Only he who understands the boundless love that Mary bore to her divine Son can fully understand the love and mercy of Mary towards us, her erring children.

The love and solicitude with which Mary watched over the Infant Jesus was also love and solicitude for us. It was for us that she nourished Jesus, in order that the blood which she gave him might be shed for us and for our sins; it was for us that she nourished Jesus, in order

that he might grow up and labor for our salvation; it was for us that she saved her divine Infant from the hands of the cruel Herod, in order that he might enrich us with his doctrine and example, and that he might finally lay down his life for us upon the cross.

"Beside the cross of Jesus stood his Mother." Only think, such a mother witnessing such a death—the death of her Only-Begotten! Christian mothers who have stood by the bedside of a dying child may realize the anguish of such a scene. But it was even here that the greatest blessing was bestowed on us; for it was here that Mary was first publicly proclaimed to be our Mother. "Woman, behold thy son!" "Dear Mother," said her dying Son, "I am now about to die; I am about to depart from thee, but I leave thee another son in my stead; I leave thee my beloved disciple. Thou shalt now be his Mother; thou shalt now be the Mother, the Refuge of sinners. Woman, behold thy son!" Mark well those words! Ye angels of heaven, bear witness to those words! Jesus has provided for us in his testament. He has bequeathed to us a priceless treasure. He has given us his own pure Virgin Mother. And, indeed, Mary receives us as her children. Every word of her divine Son is sacred in her eyes. She knows that such is the will of her dying Son. The will is written in blood—in the blood of Jesus—and sealed by his death. Jesus finally returns to heaven, and Mary remains yet on earth to encourage and console his sorrowing disciples. And now that Mary also has ascended into heaven, has she forgotten those children of sorrow whom Jesus has confided to her care? Oh! no; it is not in our Mother's heart to forget her children. Never did any one

ask a grace of Mary without being heard. In heaven her love and mercy towards us has only become more ardent, more efficacious. Every century, nay, every year, every day, every hour, especially the dying hour of so many sinners, bears witness to Mary's undying love and inexhaustible mercy.

St. Teresa gives us an account of a merchant of Valladolid who did not live as a good Christian should live. However, he had some devotion to the Blessed Virgin. One day St. Teresa went to Valladolid to find a house for her nuns. The merchant, hearing that Teresa was seeking a house, went to her and offered to give her one of his houses, saying that he would give it in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary. St. Teresa thanked him and took the house. Two months after, the gentleman was suddenly taken so very ill that he was not able to speak or to make his confession. He could only show by signs that he wished to beg pardon of our Lord for his sins, and died soon after. "After his death," says St. Teresa, "I saw our Lord. He told me that this gentleman had been very near losing his soul. But he had mercy on him because of the service he did to his blessed Mother by giving the house in her honor. She obtained for him, in the hour of death, the grace of true contrition for his sins. I was glad that his soul was saved; for I was very much afraid it would have been lost on account of his bad life."

Ah! how great is the power and mercy of Mary! How kind, how solicitous, how merciful, how careful and compassionate is the Mother of God! How often are we ignorant of the troubles that await us! Mary, however, knows them, and hastens to our assistance. How

often are we unconscious of the dangers that surround us! Mary perceives them, and protects us from all harm. How often does this good Mother pray for us when we do not think of asking her prayers! Let us treasure up those words in our hearts: "Dear Son, they have no wine." They will console us in the hour of affliction. When a sense of utter loneliness oppresses us, when we seem abandoned by all the world, then is the time to remember that we have a Mother in heaven. The Blessed Virgin Mary has not forgotten us. How often has she already prayed for us to her divine Son: "My dear Son, see, my servant has no more wine. See, he stands sorely in need of the virtue of a lively faith, charity, and holy purity." How often has Mary changed the waters of pain and sorrow into the cheering wine of joy and gladness! When we stood on the brink of the precipice, and stretched forth our hands to sin, Mary, like a tender mother, stretched forth her arms to save us. When, by our sins, we cruelly pierced the Sacred Heart of Jesus, then it was that Mary offered up for us the precious blood that gushed forth from the gaping wound.

CHAPTER XIII.

Practical Conclusions from the two Preceding Chapters.

Since God has endowed the Blessed Mother of his only-begotten Son with such power and dominion, and with such charity and mercy towards us, we ought to rejoice in the name, in the dignity, in the glory, in the power, and mercy of Mary? It would be strange indeed, were we to be slow in proclaiming her praise, and power, and mercy?

St. Anselm, St. Francis, St. Bonaventure, St. Peter Damian, St. Bernard, and, in these latter days, St. Alphonsus, stand as witnesses to the great spiritual law that the love of the Virgin Mother of God is not a sentiment or a poetry in religion, which may or may not be encouraged by individuals at their will, but that love and veneration, second only to the love and veneration paid to her divine Son, is due to her by a law which springs from the very substance of the faith. It is impossible to realize the Incarnation as we ought, and not to love and venerate the Mother of God; it is impossible to love the Son without loving the Mother. In proportion to our love to the Son will be our love to the Mother who bore him; in so far as we are conformed to the likeness of the Son we shall love the Mother, who, next to the Eternal Persons, the Father and the Holy Ghost, is the dearest object of the love of the Eternal Son. The love of the Mother of God is the overflow of the love we bear to her divine Son; it descends from him to her, and we may

measure our love to him by our love to her. It is impossible to be cold, distant, dry, or reserved towards the Mother of our Redeemer, and to be fervent in our love to the Redeemer himself.

What has been said applies to all Christians; but it applies especially to every priest. No one should be more deeply convinced of the moral necessity of the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, of her unspeakable power with God and of her unbounded mercy towards all men than the priest. It is his duty to proclaim to the people this moral necessity of invoking the Blessed Mother of God for their salvation and sanctification. To do this in a convincing and impressive manner, the priest himself must be thoroughly convinced of, and impressed by, this moral necessity of the intercession of Mary.

Moreover, no one has more and greater reasons to love the Blessed Virgin than the priest. The priest, by his very state, is bound even more than others to imitate closely the example of Jesus. Now, no one has loved and honored the Blessed Virgin more than Jesus Christ. Is the priest not, therefore, to imitate this example and cherish a most tender and most ardent devotion to the Blessed Mother of God?

The saints have always made Christ's love for his Blessed Mother the model of their love for that most holy Virgin. To name the saints who were deeply devoted to Mary would be to name them all. The more they strove to love God, the more they felt drawn to love Mary; or, to speak more correctly, the more they increased in love of Mary, the more they increased also in love for God.

The example of the Church also should induce the

priest to cherish a heartfelt devotion to the Blessed Virgin. The church, our mother, has never grown weary of praising and honoring Mary. How then can we be good priests of the Church, if we have not her spirit, if we do not imitate the example of our Mother?

The resemblance and even Relationship of the priest to the Blessed Virgin should impel him to cherish a tender devotion to this loving Mother. "Summam cum Deo affinitatem habet Maria," says St. Thomas. (2. Qu. 103, a. 4.) The priest too is most intimately related to God.

The Blessed Virgin by the sacramental words, "Fiat mihi," brought down the Son of God from heaven to become one with her; and the priest, by the sacramental words of consecration, brings down this same Son of God from heaven, upon the altar to become one with him. The Blessed Virgin brought forth the Son of God and laid him in a manger. The same Son of God is, as it were, begotten every day in the consecrated hands of the priest and placed on the altar.

He is, moreover, begotten again and again, by the words of the priest, in the hearts of the faithful. The Blessed Virgin is the channel of grace; so is the priest.

The Blessed Virgin offered her divine Son in the temple and on the cross for the sins of the world; the priest does the same every day at the altar.

Three things were required that God might become man: The sacramental words of the Blessed Virgin, the pure substance of her virginal body and the operation of the Holy Ghost. Three things also are required that man may become a God: the matter of the sacraments, the operation of the Holy Ghost and the sacramental words of the priest.

Moreover, the priest receives every day that same blood that Jesus received from his Blessed Mother. This divine blood flows in the veins of the priest and throbs in his heart. The priest, therefore, becomes in reality the blood relation of the Blessed Virgin.

How deep and tender, therefore, should be our love for the Blessed Mother of God! We naturally love our relatives and those who resemble us. How great then should be our love for her who is in every way worthy of our love!

But there are other reasons still which should induce every priest to cherish a great devotion to the Blessed Virgin. "It is morally impossible," says St. Alphonsus, "for any one to make great progress in perfection unless he has a tender and special devotion to the Blessed Mother of God." Now if this be true of every Christian, it is especially true of the priest who, by his very state, is bound to lead a life of perfection. To attempt to lead a holy life without the assistance of the Blessed Mother of God is to attempt to fly without wings.

There is a priest. "There comes upon him," says Cardinal Manning, "some secret temptation, some dangerous allurement, some unchastened intimacy, some clouding of his conscience, some relaxation of his rule, some neglect of self-examination, some omissions of prayer and meditation, some fatal opportunity. His conscience is silenced, and his will is weak and the temptation strong. He falls for the first time, and now to fall again and again is easy. The gulf is passed, and he enters upon an unknown world *ubi nullus ordo et umbra mortis.* He wonders to find himself in a state so strange and new, and to be so little afraid. Once he thought that after

such a fall he should have died; but now he finds his life whole in him. And God only, and one more, know the truth, and the truth need never come out. The seal of confession will cover it; and outwardly he is the same man—priest and pastor. Who shall know it if he do not betray himself? To shrink from work, to cease to be seen and heard, would call attention and awaken curiosity. He goes on as before, or rather he is more seen and more heard than ever. Nobody suspects him. The stone in the wall is silent, and the timber in the roof does not cry out; who, then, can know? Nobody could prove anything, even if people suspect. Safety is impunity, and impunity leads to impenitence. In the end all comes out into the light, not so much by the search of man as by the finger of God. Long impunity gives time and occasion for a long career of reiterated sins, and a daily practice of simulating piety and of dissembling sin hardens his forehead and his heart. He defies all witnesses, denies all evidence, and persists in deceiving all who can be deceived."

Who can draw that priest out of the deep abyss of sin? Who can change his heart and make him enter into himself and do penance and persevere in the spirit of penance to the end of his life? The Blessed Virgin has power and charity enough to perform this extraordinary miracle. Were it not for her power of intercession and exceedingly great mercy the fatal end of such a priest could be easily predicted. Ah! how necessary is it for such a fallen star to have continually recourse to Mary to obtain the grace of true sorrow and firm purpose of amendment and final perseverance.

There is another priest. He has exercised the office

of pastor during several years. He has preached on all sorts of subjects as well as he was able. He has neglected nothing that could instruct, touch and convert the souls entrusted to his care, but he sees that he has reaped no fruit from his labor, and worked in vain.

He feels very much grieved at the scandals given by many of his parishioners; at the lukewarmness of so many parents and at the religious indifference of the young. At last he resolves to go and consult an old priest in whose parish great piety has been flourishing for several years. To him he communicates the condition of his parish, and heaves, on account of it, now and then a deep sigh, saying: "What must I do to bring about a change for the better?"

The old priest answers: "My dear friend, you are in the same trouble I was in about twenty years ago. Your parishioners are like mine were after I had worked very hard for five years to reform their manners and make them lead more Christian lives. One day I bitterly complained about them to Almighty God. A book on the Rosary which I had just received was before me. It seemed to me I heard a voice saying to me: 'Open the book and read.' I opened it and read what the Blessed Virgin said to St. Dominic when she revealed to him the Devotion of the Rosary. 'Remember,' said she to this saint, 'remember that the redemption of the world was begun by the salutation of the angel, that it was completed by the bitter passion and death of my divine Son, and that it was established and secured by his glorious resurrection. The remedy, therefore, of so many evils shall be meditation on the mysteries of the life, death, and glory of my Son uniting

thereto the angelic salutation, by which the great mystery of redemption was announced to the world.' 'Indeed,' says the author of the book, 'the frequent remembrance of Christ incarnate for us, born for us, dead for our salvation, risen for our justification, ascended to heaven as our eternal hope, cannot but produce most admirable effects, piercing into the inmost mind, heart, and will of man far below the deepest roots of evil, so that sin in its germ should be plucked from the will, and the sincere soul should be unable to refuse consecrating her whole life to God. When we remember how our dear Saviour manifested, in every step and action of his life, his love, his benevolence, his devotedness to us, we cannot help rejoicing greatly in the excess of his condescending compassion, and express in hymns of praise and thanksgiving our pious emotions, as far as the divinely enraptured soul of man can express them. He, therefore, who can explain, with love and affection, the mysteries of the life of our Lord and the Blessed Virgin, possesses the key to the grace of the conversion of the people. Should any one try another to open the treasure of graces acquired by the life and death of Jesus Christ, he will not be able to unlock it.'

"St. Dominic introduced the Devotion of the Rosary, and wherever it was introduced a true amendment of life could be noticed in the people; so much so, that if one was seen to live on in sin the people pointed at him, saying: 'Behold one who does not say the Rosary!' Even many of the heretics were converted partly by the explanation of the mysteries of our religion as contained in the Rosary, partly by the recital of the prayers of which the Rosary is composed.

"The Blessed Alain de la Roche relates that a bishop

in Spain, notwithstanding all his endeavors, being unable to succeed in reforming his people, resolved, after the example of St. Dominic, to preach the holy Rosary, taking care to explain the mysteries and to teach them how to meditate upon them. The faithful embraced this devotion with ardor, and, in a short time, numberless conversions were wrought; ignorance, impiety, immorality, and other vices were replaced by prayer, penance, the frequenting of the holy sacraments, and the practice of all Christian virtues. This zealous prelate could not sufficiently praise God for the change which has taken place in his cathedral town; he commanded the clergy of his diocese to employ the same means, which were followed with the same success; so that in a short time the whole face of his diocese was entirely changed.

"Casimir II, King of Poland, was, then, right when he wrote to the Father-General of the Dominican Fathers in Rome: 'I beg you to send me such fathers as can preach well the devotion of the Rosary, for they are the best reformers of the manners of the people.'

"Ah! how truly does St. Alphonsus de Liguori assert that, 'the salvation of all depends upon preaching Mary, and confidence in her intercession. We know that St. Bernardine of Sienna sanctified Italy; St. Dominic converted many provinces; St. Louis Bertrand, in all his sermons, never failed to exhort his hearers to practise devotion towards Mary; and many others have done the same.

"Father Paul Segneri, the younger, a celebrated missionary, in every mission in which he was engaged, preached a sermon on devotion to Mary, and this he called his favorite sermon. The Redemptorist Fathers al-

so have an invariable rule not to omit in their missions the sermon on Our Lady ; and it is found that no discourse is so profitable to the people, or excites more compunction among them, than that on the power and mercy of Mary. To try to make the people good without inspiring them with love for the Blessed Virgin is to labor in vain. The better the people are made to understand what God has given us in Mary, the sooner they will lay aside their evil habits and practise virtue. For no sooner do they commence to love Mary and pray to her than they open their hearts to the largest channel of grace.

" In the year 1835 the number of Communions in a certain parish in the city of Paris, containing a population of twenty-seven thousand, did not exceed seven hundred. The good parish priest set to work to remedy this deplorable state of things ; he formally placed the charge committed to him under the protection of Mary, and instituted her confraternity among his people. In the year 1837 the number of Communions amounted to nine thousand five hundred ; and each succeeding year they have become more numerous.

" The spirit of infidelity and religious indifference is spreading rapidly in every direction. All the ills which an immoral and infidel press entails upon society, all the crimes arising from a godless education, menace the destruction of every vestige of Christian modesty, piety, and innocence. Nothing better can be opposed to this infernal serpent than love and devotion towards her whose office it is to crush the serpent's head whenever it makes itself visible.

" After reading all this in the book on the Rosary, I

resolved to change my style and manner of preaching. I sacrificed the studied discourses which I had been accustomed to make, and tried if I should succeed better by simply preaching the devotion of the holy Rosary, explaining the prayers which compose it and the mysteries on which it is grounded. I had neglected this excellent custom, notwithstanding the reproaches of my conscience, through human respect, fearing lest the world should ridicule me, and consider the subject unworthy of the pulpit. But I declare that, in less than a year, more conversions were made in my parish than during the thirty preceding years. I, therefore, believe that the priest, who understands best to promote love to Mary among the people by introducing the devotion of the Rosary, will meet with the greatest success in his apostolic labors."

"The earth"—that is, souls—said the Blessed Virgin to St. Dominic, "shall remain barren till watered by the dew of this devotion. You are to preach this devotion as a practice of piety most dear to my Son and to me—as a most powerful means to dissipate heresy, extinguish vice, spread virtue, implore the divine mercy and obtain protection. I desire that this manner of prayer shall be perpetually promoted and practised. The faithful shall obtain by it numberless benefits, and shall always find me ready to aid them in their wants." This promise of the Blessed Virgin has always come true; for experience shows that no sooner do the people commence to practise this devotion than they open their hearts to the largest channel of grace, so as to be flooded with heavenly gifts. This great truth has been verified in my parish and becomes more evident every day."

St. Epiphanius assures us that the Blessed Virgin bestows on those priests who are devout to her some of that charm, that attraction by which she drew down God himself from heaven; so that such priests have wondrous power to draw to God the hearts of even the most hardened sinners.

Practical Devotions.

1. Say the *Rosary*, five decades daily.
2. Wear the *Scapular*; it preserves us from many temptations and is a safeguard in dangers of body and soul.
3. Say the *Angelus*.
4. Say three Aves morning and night in honor of the immaculate purity of the Blessed Virgin.
5. Wear the *Medal* of the Blessed Virgin.
6. Have a *Picture* or a *Statue* of the Blessed Virgin in your room.
7. Prepare for her feasts by a *Novena*.
8. Invoke her in temptation.

We know from sad experience our natural weakness and the many dangers that surround us. We should, therefore, continually invoke her who is like "an army in battle array." "Satan fugit," says Thomas à Kempis, "cum dico Ave Maria." Let us call upon her especially in the confessional, where we can do so much good, but also so much harm.

The priest should especially *imitate the virtues* of the Blessed Virgin. "Honorare et non imitari," says St. Augustine, "nihil est aliud quam mendaciter adulari." (3, 30.) The Blessed Virgin is a pure creature, a child of Adam like ourselves. We will therefore not find it so hard to imitate her.

We should strive to imitate her especially *in her virginal purity.* The sacerdotal office requires that the priest should be pure as an angel. To this he has bound himself freely by a solemn, irrevocable vow. He should therefore often entreat the Faithful Virgin to obtain for him that fidelity to his vow which was so conspicuous in her.

The priest should *encourage the faithful to honor and imitate the Blessed Virgin.*

He should often preach on the Blessed Virgin, especially during the month of May and on her festivals.

He should exhort parents to consecrate their children to the Blessed Virgin while they are yet young and innocent.

He should encourage the children to wear the scapular, or at least the medal of the Blessed Virgin, to learn some hymns in her honor.

He should exhort the people to say the rosary every evening before retiring, to have a devout picture of the Blessed Virgin in the house; to have good books and read something about the Blessed Virgin, at least every Sunday; to receive Communion worthily on all her principal festivals.

By encouraging the faithful to practise this beautiful devotion to the Blessed Virgin, the priest will not only save the souls of his flock, but will also secure his own salvation. "Qui me elucidant, vitam æternam habebunt." (Eccl. xxiv, 30.)

Such was the advice which the old priest gave his brother-priest, who followed it and in a short time a thorough change was wrought in the greater part of his parishioners.

What should especially encourage us to cherish a very

great devotion to the Blessed Virgin and preach and practise the devotion of the Rosary are the Pontifical Briefs of Pope Leo XIII, addressed to the Universal Church in 1883 and 1884.

In these Briefs the Holy Father reminds the Universal Church of the glories which cluster so thickly around the devotion of the Rosary. As might be expected Pope Leo has, like many of his predecessors, sought weapons of defence against the enemies of the Church, in the sword given by the Blessed Virgin to St. Dominic.

The reign of Leo XIII has been remarkable for the force with which he has addressed himself to the intellect of the Church and of the age. The characteristic of the present Pontiff is distinctly intellectual. The intellect of the world has gone astray; far from anathematizing it on account of its aberration, he has sent the enlightened in search of the darkened intellect—"*fides quærens intellectum.*" The world has become accustomed to his voice, and has heard him not altogether unwillingly. It has heard him instruct mankind on the nature of true civilization and progress; on the necessity of a deeper study of philosophy; on the duty of obedience to civil authority; on the sanctity of marriage; on the best means of reforming society; on the pursuit of the study of history, and on other topics, the intellect always holding the conspicuous place.

But in 1883 and again in 1884 Leo XIII turned the whole mind and heart of the Church, not towards philosophy or history, or the moral law, but towards the *Sedes Sapientiæ;* and by a decree commanded that the Rosary and Litany of the Blessed Virgin should be sung or recited every day for over a month in every church having charge of souls.

Besides, the Holy Father urgently exhorts all to the practice of the daily repetition of the Rosary. And, as if to express still more emphatically his sense of the value of the use of this devotion, his Holiness goes on to decree that in the Litany of Loreto, after the invocation, "Regina sine labe originali concepta," shall be added the words, "Regina Sacratissimi Rosarii, ora pro nobis." Those to whom this simplest, as well as most distinctively Catholic of devotions is most familiar, highly appreciate this latest addition to the glorious titles of the world-famous Litany; but to every child of the Church there will be some gladness in seeking the intercession of the Mother of God under a name so old and still so new. The many who have made the Rosary a part of the daily and special service of their lives, greatly rejoice at this signal honor which has thus been rendered to their favorite devotion, and a devotion which is so closely entwined with the earliest associations of us all. The prayer, which throughout Catholic Christendom childish lips are taught to lisp at the mother's knee, the circle of the Rosary is a link binding youth to age, and poverty to wealth, and now, at the bidding of Pope Leo, comes to give a new title of honor—even to the Mother of God. And wherever through the world there is a Catholic struggle, in whatever land the peace of the Church is troubled, there will come new heart to the faithful, for shall they not know that Pope Leo is mindful of them, and the sword given to St. Dominic is unsheathed?

The worldly-minded are apt to take it for granted that there is a natural antagonism between intellect and piety, so that they do not expect to find both exhibited

in any remarkable degree in the same person. Men have, therefore, commented on the fact that an intellectual Pope, like Leo, should be as distinguished by zeal for piety as by learning. The circumstance, however, is no new one in the line of Roman Pontiffs, who, being the Vicars of Christ, know the value and power attached by God to prayer addressed to his ever-glorious Mother.

The Church of God is ruled, neither by diplomacy alone, nor by learning alone. The world is converted and the Church extended by that invisible power of the grace of God which enlightens the mind to know the true religion, strengthens the will to follow and inflames the heart with love for it. This invisible power is brought down from heaven, and preserved and propagated chiefly through prayer, and devotion to the ever Blessed Mother of God.

In the first years of the eighteenth century God raised up several remarkable men to be the light and consolation of that desolate period. Among these was one named Grignon de Montfort. He founded two Religious Congregations in France—one for men, called the *Congregation of Missioners of the Holy Ghost of St. Laurent-sur-Sevre ;* the other for women, devoted to nursing the sick and promoting Christian education, and called the *Daughters of Wisdom.* Clement XI, made him a missionary apostolic throughout France, giving him a special mission to combat Jansenism. The holy man, whose process of canonization is now far advanced, wrote a remarkable work on *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin.* It was translated into English some twenty years ago by Father Faber. The Venerable Grignon de Montfort

seems to have possessed, among other gifts, that of prophecy; and we read in the above-named treatise such sentences as the following:—

"The greatest saints, the souls richest in graces and virtues, shall be the most assiduous in praying to Our Blessed Lady.. . . . I have said that this would come to pass, particularly at the end of the world, and indeed *presently*, because the Most High, with his holy Mother, has to form for himself great saints, who shall surpass most of the other saints in sanctity, as much as the cedars of Lebanon outgrow the little shrubs, as has been revealed to a holy soul, whose life has been written by a great servant of God. . . . These great souls, full of zeal and grace, shall be chosen to match themselves against the enemies of God, who shall rage on all sides; and they shall be singularly devout to Our Blessed Lady . . . by their words and examples they shall bend the whole world to true devotion to Mary. This shall bring upon them many enemies; but it shall also bring many victories and much glory to God alone. God wishes to reveal and make known Mary, the masterpiece of his hands, in these latter times. . . . Mary must shine forth more than ever in mercy, in might, and in grace, in these latter times. The power of Mary over all the devils will especially break out in the latter times, when Satan will lay his snares against her heel."

We have quoted a few from many similar passages in Grignon de Montfort's writings, as indicating a line of history in which the late Encyclical of the Pope may be playing a more conspicuous part than at first sight appears. Certain it is that since the death of the Venerable Grignon de Montfort in 1716 the Church has

witnessed an extraordinary increase and propagation of devotion to the Blessed Virgin—new Feasts have been established in her honor; numberless Congregations of both sexes have been founded bearing her name; Pius IX defined her Immaculate Conception; and now Leo XIII has bid the whole Catholic world recite her Rosary and Litany in the closest connection with her divine Son, either at the Sacrifice of the Mass, or before the Blessed Sacrament exposed. One certain result of these unusual prayers, whatever else may follow, will be to deepen in the clergy as well as in the laity, the devotion of the Catholic world to the holy Mother of God; it will tend directly towards strengthening the Church by forming the characteristic of those saints whose advent is expected in the days of Antichrist. And thus, if it should turn out that evil times are in store for the Church, and that persecutions and defections are to be her lot—if the worst anticipations be realized instead of the most consoling—the Encyclical of Leo XIII will have had a large part in preparing the Church for the final struggle which will take place between good and evil, between Christ and Antichrist.

CHAPTER XIV.

Patron-Saints.—Devotion to St. Joseph.

It is not enough for a priest to cherish a great devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary; he should also cherish a tender devotion to the angels and saints, especially to his guardian-angel and patron-saints. "The saints," says Cardinal Manning, "are our examples. Their counsels, their sayings, their instincts, are our rule and admonition. S. Philip bids us read authors who have S. before their name. They were once what we are now, weak, buffeted, tempted, penitent, and even sinful. We shall be hereafter, if we persevere to the end, what they are now. Their examples come home to us in every state of life, and in every part of our spiritual warfare. They are planted all along our path, in every age and condition, as guides and admonitions. In their lives we see the commandments, the precepts, and the counsels embodied. Every devout priest has his patrons. A priest without an intimate relation to patron-saints can have little realization of the supernatural order in which we live, and of our communion with "the spirits of the just made perfect." (Heb. xii, 23.)

"But," says a priest, "the Council of Trent has only declared that the invocation of the saints is useful. Why then do you speak of special devotion to the saints?" St. Thomas Aquinas answers that "When God created heaven and earth, he established a marvellous order, a universal harmony among all his creatures. This order

is that the good of inferior beings is to be procured only by the generous interposition of superior beings,—that beings of a lower class are to be led to God by those of a higher class. 'By this order of his divine Providence God enlightens and instructs the angels of a lower rank by those of a higher rank. In like manner he procures the spiritual and temporal good of men by the mediation of his saints.

Now, it is not for want of power that God uses secondary causes for our spiritual and temporal good; it is rather to manifest his infinite wisdom and goodness in the general government of his divine Providence, as well as the merit and sanctity of some of his creatures whom he mercifully deigns to associate with him in the government of his Providence. It is our duty to conform in all things to this infallible order and have on this account recourse to the intercession of the saints. Such is his holy will, says St. Thomas.

We poor pilgrims, therefore, are under a certain obligation to invoke the saints, in order to obtain, through their intercession, the divine grace necessary for our salvation, not because God cannot save us without the intercession of the saints, but because the order established by God requires that, while we are in this world, we be brought to God by the prayers of the saints. (St. Thomas, in 4. Sent. dist. 45, qu. 3, a. 2.)

It is on this account that St. Augustine says: "There are many things that God does not grant without a mediator and intercessor." (Quest. 149, super Exod; serm. 2 et 4 de St. Steph.) The justness of this remark is confirmed by two examples—Abimelech and the friends of Job were pardoned, but it was only through the prayers of Abraham and Job. (Gen. xx.)

"A priest, therefore," says Cardinal Manning, "must be of a strangely unreflecting mind, if he does not find himself in manifold relations to 'the Church of the first-born in heaven.' (Heb. xii, 23.) The day or place of our birth, our falls, our faults, our needs, our works, all suggest to us many who, in their warfare on earth, were tried as we are. The habit of mind that turns to the saints is a docile reverence, whilst the habit of mind that turns away from them is an indocile self-sufficiency. Devotion and conscious relation to the saints is a part of the gift of piety. A priest who is devout to the saints will hardly be irreverent and contumacious, or critical and murmuring against his superiors."

If every good priest, then, choses saints as special patrons, he choses especially St. Joseph on account of his high dignity, great virtues and great power of intercession.

1. Every good priest choses St. Joseph as special patron-saint on account of *his high dignity.*

In choosing a person for our patron, we take into consideration his dignity, his virtues, and his power. His dignity induces us to honor and esteem him; his virtues incline us to imitate him, and his power and abilities force us, as it were, to choose him for our patron.

On noticing these qualities in Joseph, the son of Jacob, Pharao did not hesitate for a moment to make him ruler over all Egypt. He could not help admiring Joseph's wisdom and dignity with God in interpreting his two dreams. He noticed Joseph's industry, disinterestedness and paternal care for all his subjects. Hence it was that he said to him: "Behold I have appointed thee over the whole land of Egypt." And he took his ring from

his own hand and gave it into his (Joseph's) hand; and he put upon him a robe of silk, and put a chain of gold about his neck. And he made him go up into his second chariot, the crier proclaiming that all should bow their knee before him and that they should know he was made governor over the whole land of Egypt. And he turned his name and called him in the Egyptian tongue the Saviour of the world. And when the people cried to Pharao for food, he said to them: "Go to Joseph." (Gen. xl, 1.)

Hence it was that all without exception came and knelt down before Joseph and looked up to him as their father, saying: "Our life is in thy hand; only let my lord look favorably upon us, and we will gladly serve the King." (Gen. xlvii, 25.) It is thus that this Joseph of Egypt was a figure of St. Joseph, the foster-father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. If the Egyptians could in truth feel happy for having so wise and honored a ruler in Joseph, the son of Jacob, we have undoubtedly far better reasons to be happy for having St. Joseph, the spouse of the Blessed Virgin, for our patron, because he is a more honored, more able and more powerful patron.

To prove this, I have but to remind you of the fact that when God calls a person to an office of great importance, he invariably endows him with all the gifts necessary to fulfil faithfully the duties of that office. How great then must have been the wisdom and abilities with which St. Joseph was endowed! Almighty God had placed into this world a family that was dearer to him than heaven and earth—a family on which depended the salvation of the whole human race. Mary, the Blessed Mother of

God and the Spouse of the Holy Ghost, needed a protector, and Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, and Man-God, in time needed a foster-father to protect and instruct him and provide for his temporal wants—a foster-father whose wise counsels and commands the Holy Infant Jesus was to obey. Who was the man that was called to so wonderful an office? If faith did not teach us that the one that was called to this sublime office was a human being, it would be right for us to ask: "Who was the God that was commissioned to govern God?" Nicephorus asks in astonishment: "Which of all men is endowed with so great a wisdom as to be entrusted with so sublime an office?" And he answers: "St. Joseph alone was that privileged personage."

Abraham, Moses, David, Isaias, Elias, Daniel were indeed all great men. Posterity is in admiration of their greatness at the mere mention of their names. But God found none of them worthy to be the foster-father of his well-beloved Son. He called them, it is true, to very great offices. He called, for instance, Abraham to be "the Father of many nations." (Gen. xvii, 5.) "God appointed Moses the God of Pharao." (Exod. vii, 1.) He called Isaias to preach to kings, princes and tyrants. He appointed Daniel to be a lord over Nabuchodonosor. But none of them was worthy to be placed over the divine Infant and his ever blessed Mother. This happiness was vouchsafed only to St. Joseph. The God of infinite wisdom, power and majesty obeys and follows the direction of St. Joseph, just as if he were in need of being governed and cared for. "And he was subject to them." (Luke, ii, 57.) Joseph had to teach the divine Infant how to walk, to speak, and to work. Joseph had to work hard

to provide bread and clothing for the Son of the Eternal Father. In the persecution of Herod he had to save the life of the divine Infant by taking flight into Egypt.

Kings and emperors may glory in their large possessions and their great number of subjects. St. Joseph, it is true, had but two personages under his dominion; but one of them is God himself, and the other is the Mother of God. Learn from this, says St. Bernard, how great before God St. Joseph must have been, since the Lord of heaven and earth appointed him to be the solace of his Mother, the provider in his temporal wants and the faithful coadjutor in the divine work of the redemption of mankind. Now, if God appointed St. Joseph to protect and govern, in this world, the two holiest personages —Jesus and Mary—am I not right to ask: Are we not right if we choose him for our special patron, especially now that he is reigning glorious in heaven?

2. *We should choose St. Joseph as our special patron on account of his great virtues.*

"The Blessed Virgin," says St. Francis de Sales, "is the glorious Mother of God. And as St. Joseph was espoused to this glorious Mother, both this Mother and her divine Child belong to him. St. Joseph was thus made a partaker of all the goods of his dear Spouse. This made him grow wonderfully in perfection. The Blessed Virgin possessed all virtues in so high a degree that no other pure creature can attain to it. The glorious St. Joseph was the only one who approached nearest to it by his continual communication with our Lady. A mirror opposite to the rays of the sun receives its rays very perfectly, and another mirror placed opposite to that which receives them,

it is true, only receives them by reverberation; yet it represents them so clearly that we can hardly notice which one it is that receives them immediately from the sun. So it was with our Lady and St. Joseph. Mary was like a perfect mirror opposite to the rays of the Sun of Justice —rays which brought into her soul all virtues in perfection; and these virtues and perfections reverberated so perfectly on St. Joseph that he almost seemed to be as perfect and to have virtues in as high a degree as the glorious Virgin, the Mother of God.

"But in what virtues especially did St. Joseph excel? He excelled in the virtues of virginity, humility, constancy and valor. Now in what degree do we suppose St. Joseph possessed virginity, a virtue which makes us like the angels? If the most holy virgin was not only a virgin most pure and white, but rather, as Holy Church sings, "Holy and Immaculate Virginity, she was virginity itself;" how great then in this virtue must we suppose him to have been who was chosen by the Eternal Father to be the guardian of her virginity, or rather to be the companion of it, since she did not need any other guard than herself? They had both made a vow to keep their virginity all their lives, and behold, God willed that they should be espoused to each other, not to make them revoke or repent of their vow, but to encourage and confirm each other in persevering in their holy intention. They, therefore, vowed again to live together in virginity every day of their life.

"Since the Blessed Virgin, then, was the spouse of St. Joseph, she was subject to him, and he took care of her. But St. Joseph was far from having been placed over her to make her break her vow of virginity; on the contrary,

he was given her for a companion, and in order that the purity of our Lady might more perfectly preserve its integrity under the veil and shadow of their holy espousals and holy union.

"If the most holy Virgin is a door, said the Eternal Father, we *will that it be not opened;* for it is an Eastern Gate, by which none may go in or out; on the contrary, it must be lined and strengthened, as it were, with incorruptible wood, that is, she must have a companion in her purity, the great St. Joseph, who for this end was to surpass all the saints, and even the angels and the Cherubim, in this most estimable virtue of virginity.

"Although St. Joseph was so very great in the sight of God, yet he lived all the time of his life in great poverty and abjection. Under this poverty and abjection he kept concealed his great virtues and dignities.

"There is no doubt that St. Joseph was more valiant than David and wiser than Solomon, and yet who could have thought so without being enlightened by heavenly light, seeing him reduced to exercise the trade of a carpenter? So completely did he keep hidden all the signal gifts that God had bestowed upon him. From this we also see how St. Joseph was more humble and abject than we can describe or imagine.

"This one example will suffice to make it clear. He goes into his own country, and to his town of Bethlehem, and, as far as we know, nobody but himself was rejected from all the houses, so as to be forced to retire and to take his chaste spouse into a stable. Oh, to what an extremity was his abjection and humility reduced! His humility was the reason, says St. Bernard, that he wanted to leave our Lady when he noticed her pregnancy.

St. Joseph, says St. Bernard, spoke on this occasion to himself thus: What is this? I know that she is a virgin, for we have made a vow together to keep our virginity and purity, which she would not break on my account, and yet I see that she is pregnant and that she is a mother. How can it be that maternity is found with virginity, and that virginity does not prevent maternity? O God! may she not be that glorious virgin of whom the prophets declare that she shall conceive and be the Mother of the Messias? Oh! if it is so, God forbid that I should stay with her any longer, I am so unworthy; it is better to leave her secretly on account of my unworthiness and not to live any longer in her company. An admirable sentiment of humility, which also made St. Peter say to our Lord: "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man." (Luke v, 8.)

"But if St. Joseph was careful to hide his virtues under the shelter of holy humility, he was still more careful to conceal the precious pearl of his virginity. For this reason he consented to be espoused to the Blessed Virgin, in order that no one might know it and that under the holy veil of espousals his life might be more hidden.

"Ah! which of the saints, except the Blessed Virgin, ever evinced a greater humility than St. Joseph? He had a great share in that divine Treasure which he had dwelling with him, who is our Lord and Master; and yet he kept himself so humble and abased that he seemed to have no share in it; nevertheless, it belonged to him more than to any other, after the most holy Virgin; and no one can doubt it, since he was one of his family, and the Son of his spouse who belonged to him.

"To make the comparison more conformable to the pur-

ity of the saints of whom we are speaking. If a dove carried in her beak a date and let it fall into a garden, would we not say that the palm-tree which should spring from it, would belong to the owner of the garden? If this is so, no one can doubt that the Holy Spirit having, like a divine dove, let fall this divine date in the enclosed and shut up garden of the most holy Virgin—a garden sealed and surrounded on all sides with the hedge of the holy vow of virginity and of chastity all immaculate—which belonged to the glorious St. Joseph as the spouse to the husband; no one can doubt, I say, or deny that this divine palm-tree which bears the fruit that nourishes to immortality, belonged entirely to St. Joseph, who yet did not exalt himself the more for it, did not become proud, but became always more humble. O God! how beautiful it was to see the respect and reverence with which he treated both the Mother and the Son! If he wished to leave the Mother when he was not quite aware of the greatness of her dignity, into what admiration and deep abasement was he not afterwards thrown when he saw himself so much honored that our Lord and our Lady became obedient to his will and did nothing but his command? This is a thing which cannot be understood.

"Let us now see how the virtues of constancy and valor existed in a very eminent degree in St. Joseph.

"There is a great difference between constancy and perseverance, and between strength and valor. We call a man constant who stands firm and prepared to endure the assaults of his enemies without being dismayed or losing courage during the combat. But perseverance chiefly regards a certain interior weariness which comes

upon us from the length of our sufferings, and which is as powerful an enemy as can be encountered. Now perseverance makes a man despise this enemy, so that he obtains the victory by a continual equality and submission of mind to the will of God.

"Strength is what makes a man powerfully resist the attacks of his enemies; but valor is a virtue which makes him not only keep himself in readiness to fight or to resist when the occasion presents itself, but to attack the enemy even when he is quiet.

"Now, our glorious St. Joseph was endowed with all these virtues and he practised them wonderfully well. What constancy did he show when, seeing our Lady pregnant and not knowing how that could be. O God! what distress, what trouble of mind did he then suffer? Nevertheless, he does not complain; he is not unkind, or less gracious towards his spouse; he does not ill-treat her on that account, but remains as gentle and as respectful to her as he had ever been.

"But what valor and strength does he not show in the victory which he gained over the two great enemies of man—the devil and the world! He gained this victory by the practice of humility. The devil is the greatest enemy of humility. For want of it he was cast out of heaven into hell. He leaves no artifice untried to prevail upon man to abandon this virtue which he knows renders him exceedingly pleasing to God. We may well say, valiant and strong is the man who, like St. Joseph, perseveres in this virtue; for he conquers at the same time the devil and the world, which is full of ambition. vanity and pride.

"With regard to perseverance against that interior

enemy, the weariness or distress that comes over us from the continuation of abject, humiliating and painful things, or from the various accidents that happen to us; oh, how greatly was this saint tried by God and even by men in his journey! The angel commands him to set out quickly and to take the divine Infant and the Mother into Egypt; and behold, he sets out at once without saying a word. He does not inquire, "Where shall I go? What road shall I take? How shall we find food? Who will receive us?" He sets out probably with his tools on his back, in order to gain in the sweat of his brow bread for himself and his family. Oh! how much must he have felt that distress of which we are speaking, seeing that the angel had not even told him how long he was to stay there! He could not establish himself in any permanent home, not knowing when the angel might command him to return. How admirable is this perfect obedience of St. Joseph! The angel did not tell him how long he was to remain in Egypt, and he did not inquire; he dwelt there very probably for the space of five years without inquiring about the time of his return, being sure that He who had commanded him to go, would again command him when he had to return, and Joseph was always ready to obey. He was in a land, not only of strangers, but of enemies of the Israelites because the Egyptians still resented the Israelites' departure and their having been the cause of a great number of the Egyptians being drowned in the act of pursuing them.

"You may imagine how much St. Joseph must have longed to return on account of the continual fears he must have had among the Egyptians. The anxiety of not knowing when he could return must, no doubt, have

greatly afflicted and tormented his poor heart; nevertheless, he remained always the same, always sweet, tranquil, and persevering in his submission to the good pleasure of God by which he was entirely guided; for, as he was just, his will was always submissive, united and conformed to the will of God. To be just is nothing else than to be perfectly united to the will of God and to be conformed to it in all circumstances, prosperous or adverse.

"That St. Joseph was always, on all occasions, perfectly submissive to the will of God, no one can doubt. See how the angel of the Lord makes him turn in every direction. He tells him that he must go into Egypt, and he goes there; he commands him to return, and he returns. God wills that he should be poor, which is one of the greatest trials he can make us go through; and St. Joseph submits to it lovingly, and not only for a short time, but for his whole life. And what was his poverty? It was a poverty despised, rejected, and necessitous. The voluntary poverty professed by religious is very amiable inasmuch as it does not prevent their receiving and taking those things that are necessary for them, forbidding and depriving them only of superfluities. But the poverty of St. Joseph, of our Lord and of our Lady was not such; for though it was voluntary, because he loved it dearly, yet it was abject and despised, because every one took this saint for a poor carpenter, who, doubtless, was not able to prevent his little family from being in want of many necessaries of life, though he labored with unequalled affection for their support. St. Joseph, however, submitted very humbly to the will of God in the continuation of his poverty and abjection, not allowing himself to be in the least overcome or cast down

by the interior distress which undoubtedly made many attacks upon him; but he remained always constant in his submission, which, like all his other virtues, went always on increasing and becoming more perfect.

So also our Lady gained every day an increase of virtues and perfections which she derived from her most holy Son who, not being able to grow in anything, since he was from the instant of his conception such as he is and will be eternally, caused the Holy Family in which he was, to be continually growing and advancing in perfection, our Lady drawing her perfection from his divine goodness, and St. Joseph receiving it, as we have said, by the intervention of our Lady.

3. *We should choose St. Joseph as our special patron on acccount of his great power of intercession in heaven.*

What was the principal cause for which the Egyptians loved and respected so much Joseph, the ruler over Egypt? It was the great honor of being a father to Pharao, as he himself told his brothers: "God hath made me as it were a father to Pharao and Lord of his house, and governor of all the land in Egypt." (Gen. xlv, 8.) In order to show the power and authority of St. Joseph it is not necessary that he should be descended from a very noble and world-renowned family; we need but remember what St. Basil says in praising the Blessed Virgin Mary: "You cannot extol the greatness and dignity of the Blessed Virgin better than by saying: 'Mary, of whom was born Jesus.' (Matt. i, 16.)" In like manner, the great dignity and power of St. Joseph are told in these few words: "Joseph, the foster-father of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father."

It is thus that Joseph is called by Mary, the Mother of

God, "Son, why hast thou done so to us? Behold *thy father* and I have sought thee sorrowing." (Luke ii, 48.) Joseph passed also as father of Jesus Christ in the opinion of all those who knew him. They asked one another: "Is not this the carpenter's son?" (Matt. xiii, 55.) And again in Holy Scripture Joseph is called the father of Jesus Christ. "And his father and mother were wondering at those things which were spoken concerning him." (Luke, ii, 33.) Jesus himself, by his childlike submission to St. Joseph, showed that he looked upon him as his father. As the heavenly Father spoke in joyful accents on Mount Thabor and said: "This is my well-beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," (Matt. xvii, 5,) so, in like manner, St. Joseph could say in his poor work-shop and other places: "O great happiness of mine! This is my well-beloved Son, in whom I glory and exceedingly rejoice. O ye holy angels of heaven and ye, men, on earth! Jesus, it is true, is your King; but he is my son! He calls me his father and I call him my well-beloved child." Can there be an honor, an authority and a power greater than this? It is from this honor that St. Bernard, St. Bernardine of Sienne, St. Isidor and others draw the conclusion that St. Joseph, with the exception of the Blessed Virgin, surpasses all other saints in holiness, dignity and power. Suarez is of the same opinion and says that this opinion is well-founded. Be this as it may; it cannot be denied that among all men there is none equal to St. Joseph in the power and dignity that are derived from his title of honor of being called the father of Christ, the eternal Son of God. "There is none among men," says St. Bernard, "who, like St. Joseph, is called the father of the Son of God. In this dignity St. Joseph has no equal."

In a war which was going on between the Spaniards and Saracens, Vasco Fernandez advanced, in very stormy weather, very near to a city of the enemy and put up, on the wall of a house, the following notice: "This far Vasco Fernandez has advanced." When another Spaniard, who wished to be more valiant and audacious, saw this notice, he advanced still more towards the centre of the city, and put up on the wall of a house the following notice: "Thus far Vasco Fernandez has not advanced." Great and holy servants of God, we may here exclaim; you have raised yourselves very high in merits, in holiness, in honors, dignity and power with God; some of you are called forerunners of Christ; others the vice-gerents and apostles of Christ; others again are martyrs of Christ, others the friends, the brethren and children of Christ—thus far, it is true, you have advanced in honor and in the love of Christ, but you must and can avow, without any detriment to your glory, that none of you advanced in honor so far as to be called the father of the eternal Son of God. This honor has been bestowed upon St. Joseph alone. Can we then choose a greater and better patron than St. Joseph?

From what has been said it is clear how great the power of intercession of St. Joseph is with God to obtain all spiritual and temporal favors for those who pray to him with confidence. If it is true that the petition of a good friend is, as it were, a law, what then must we think of the prayer of a father addressed to his all-powerful son, who has said: "Whatsoever you ask you shall receive." If the prayer of other saints is so powerful with God as to obtain for us so many graces, spiritual and temporal; if the prayers and tears of the poor continually cry to

heaven and force God, as it were, to bestow upon us so many blessings and favors, will not the services and acts of charity rendered by St. Joseph to Jesus Christ, obtain for us blessings far greater and more numerous? What favor can be refused to the powerful voice of Christ's blood which was nourished and increased by the hard labor of St. Joseph?

Other friends and saints of God may say to God, "O Lord, whenever we saw Thee hungry and thirsty and naked in the person of the poor, we always gave Thee to eat, and to drink and we clothed Thee." But they render these acts of charity to Christ only in the person of the poor; but St. Joseph can say in truth that, when Christ was hungry and thirsty, he gave him in person to eat and to drink. "Remember, my dear Son," he can say, "that I carried you as a little child into Egypt and brought you back to Nazareth. Then it was that I saw you often hungry and thirsty and I did all in my power to allay your hunger and quench your thirst. How often did I take you on my arms to make you rest from the fatigue of walking? How often did I take off my clothes to make you rest on them during night? For many years I provided food and raiment for you and your Mother. Behold now those good children of mine on earth who, with great confidence, pray to me, firmly believing that I can obtain from you every blessing and favor for them; they are now crying to me in hopes that you, on my account, will assist them in all their necessities, spiritual as well as temporal. They are all my clients. Will you, my beloved Son, deny the favors they ask of you through my intercession?

My dear confrères, I repeat what I have just said, that is, if Jesus Christ hears the prayers of the saints in

heaven, and of the friends of God on earth on account of the charity which they have shown to his brethren on earth, he will most certainly hear the prayer of his foster-father! "Some of the saints," says St. Thomas Aquinas, "enjoy the privilege to obtain special favors in certain necessities for those by whom they are invoked; but St. Joseph enjoys the privilege to assist us in all our necessities, provided we pray to him with confidence in his powerful intercession." "Of all the saints," says St. Isidor, "I believe St. Joseph to be, next to the Blessed Virgin, the most powerful advocate with God." "I do not remember," says St. Teresa, "having ever asked anything of S. Joseph which I did not obtain. It seems that God grants other saints the grace to help us in certain necessities; but I know by experience that S. Joseph comes to our aid in all. I beg in the name of God that those who do not believe what I say will give my plan a trial."

Father Lallement, S. J., who was very devoted to St. Joseph, says the same of this saint. When he wished to induce a person to cherish a great devotion to St. Joseph, he assured him that there was no spiritual or temporal favor which St. Joseph could not obtain for him. One day he sent for Fathers Paul Raguenau, and Jacques Nouet, who were then the Rectors of the College at Bourges. He promised them that St. Joseph would obtain for them any grace they would ask of him, if they induced their scholars to honor St. Joseph in an especial manner, and to receive holy Communion on the feast of this saint. These two Fathers complied with this condition. After this, they went to see Father Lallement and told him the favors they had asked of St. Joseph. Father Nouet

asked the grace to speak and write well on our Lord Jesus Christ. Next day he went again to Father Lallement to tell him that, after more mature reflection on the grace he had asked he came to the conclusion to ask instead another grace that might be better for his spiritual advancement. Father Lallement answered that it was too late to ask for another favor since the grace he had asked was already granted and that he had promised him only this grace for certain. That Father Nouet had really received this grace is evident from his sermons and large work which he wrote on Jesus Christ. The other Father never revealed the grace which St. Joseph had obtained for him.

Ah! if we had but one-half of the devotion that these saintly men bore to St. Joseph, we, too, would be favored by this saint as they were.

One day Father Alvarez, S. J., was very sick. Another father of the Society visited him, gave him a picture of St. Joseph and encouraged him to recommend himself to this glorious saint. Father Alvarez said: "You are right, Father; the Blessed Mother of God told me exactly the same when I was in her house of Loretto. There it was that I conceived a great devotion to St. Joseph."

One day Father Surin, S. J., travelled in a stage for three days with a young man who was filled with the Holy Ghost. He asked him whether he cherished a great devotion to St. Joseph. The young man answered "that Jesus Christ himself gave him, six years ago, St. Joseph as his special protector. Among other things, God also made known to me that St. Joseph was the greatest of all saints after the Blessed Virgin and St. John the Baptist; that he was replenished with the Holy Ghost in

a manner quite different from that of the Apostles; that he exercises a special power over those souls whose virtues are to remain hidden in this world as his always were; that, if St. Joseph is not known better according to his merits, it is because God wished that, as a reward for his extraordinary purity, only those pure souls should know him who are sufficiently enlightened to know and understand the great virtues and gifts of this saint; that St. Joseph was a man of great silence; that, in his house of Nazareth he spoke but little, that Mary spoke less and that our Lord spoke less than both." (Extract from a letter of Father Surin.) As our Lord gave St. Joseph to this young man to protect and guide him in the spiritual life, and as the Blessed Virgin inspired Father Alvarez with a special devotion to her glorious Spouse, so, in like manner, God has given us, through his Church, our Mother, St. Joseph as our special patron.

The Holy See, by placing the whole Church under the direct patronage of St. Joseph, and by indulgencing prayers to him for priests, seems to have suggested to all priests the cultivation of a particular devotion to this great patriarch; for to him, as to a missionary priest, was committed the duty of carrying about Jesus and Mary; to him, as to the priest to-day, was committed the responsibility of caring and providing for the life and the honor of the Mother and Son. We priests, therefore should imitate the saints in their devotion to St. Joseph.

St. Francis de Sales had a special devotion to St. Joseph. He used to carry a picture of this saint in his breviary. He says of St. Joseph that we must nowise doubt that this glorious saint has great credit with God who has so favored him as to raise him to heaven both

body and soul. This is the more probable, as we have no relic of him here below on earth; and it seems to me that no one can doubt this truth. For how could he who had been obedient to him all the time of his life, have refused this grace to St. Joseph? No doubt, when our Lord descended to Limbo, St. Joseph spoke to him in the following manner:

"O my Lord, I pray Thee to remember that when Thou camest from heaven to earth, I received Thee into my house, into my family, and that, as soon as Thou wast born, I received Thee into my arms. Now that Thou art going to heaven, take me with Thee. I received Thee into my family, receive me now into Thine, since Thou art going there. I have carried Thee in my arms, carry me now in Thine; and as I took care to support and guide Thee during the course of Thy life on earth, do Thou take care of me and guide me to life everlasting."

And if it is true that, as we must believe, that by virtue of the Most Holy Sacrament which we receive, our bodies will rise on the day of general judgment, how can we doubt that our Lord caused to rise with him to heaven the glorious St. Joseph, body and soul, who had the honor and the grace of carrying him so often in his blessed arms, in which our Lord took so great pleasure? Oh! how many kisses he gave him most tenderly with his blessed lips to reward, in some measure, his labor! St. Joseph, then, is in heaven, body and soul; there is no doubt of it.

St. Vincent de Paul used to set St. Joseph before all his priests as their model. He also placed all his seminaries under his patronage and required all his mission-

aries to place themselves and their labors under his care, and to spread everywhere devotion to him as well as to the Mother of God.

Of the seventeen convents, each with a church attached, that St. Teresa built in her lifetime, she had fifteen dedicated to St. Joseph.

Father Lallement practised devotion to St. Joseph in the following manner:—

At four different times in the day he considered, (1) The faithfulness of St. Joseph in co-operating with the grace and inspirations of God.

(2) He considered how St. Joseph united the contemplative life with the active, that is, how he joined prayer to action.

(3) He considered how St. Joseph, as the companion of the Blessed Virgin, learned from her the practice of all virtues.

(4) He considered the acts of adoration, reverence, love and gratitude which St. Joseph daily practised towards the divine Child, and asked for the grace of a most tender love for Jesus Christ.

It was by these considerations that Father Lallement rapidly advanced in the interior life and became a great servant of the Lord. Let us imitate his example. The spirit of prayer, prompt and blind obedience to the orders of superiors, the love and imitation of Jesus Christ and his ever Blessed Mother, zeal for souls and especially for children, the gift of discretion in leading souls to God, a happy death are the graces which we should especially ask through the intercession of St. Joseph. "Venite ad me et ego dabo vobis: quid? omnia bona Ægypti, ut comedatis medullam terrae." (Gen. xlv, 18.)

"Oh, how happy should we be," says St. Francis de Sales, "if we could deserve to have a share in his holy intercession! for nothing will be refused him either by our Lady or by her divine Son. He will obtain for us, if we have confidence in him, a holy growth in all virtues, but especially in those which he possessed in a higher degree than any others, that is, holy purity of body and soul, humility, constancy, valor and perseverance—virtues which will render us victorious over our enemies in this life, and make us merit the grace to go and enjoy in eternal life the reward prepared for those who shall imitate the example given them by St. Joseph in this life—a reward which will be nothing less than eternal happiness, in which we shall enjoy the clear vision of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

Examples.

Some years ago there lived in Westphalia, Germany, a good priest who cherished a tender devotion to St. Joseph. He asked of this saint the favor that none of his parishioners might die without the last sacraments. One night he was called to administer the last sacraments to a dying woman. He was told the street and number of the house. When he came there he was told that there was no dying person in the house. But he positively asserted that this was the house to which he had been called. "Perhaps," said at last one of the inmates of the house, "perhaps the old woman in the garret may be sick." "Well, go and see her," said the priest. They went and found her in a dying condition. The priest went up and administered the last sacraments to her. Having done his duty, he asked her whether she had

sent for him. "No, Father," she said, "I had no one to send." "Did you ever do anything to obtain so great a favor?" asked the priest. "Father," said she, "all I have done is: I said every day for many years three times the Hail Mary in honor of St. Joseph to obtain the grace not to die without the last sacraments." "Well," said the priest, "let us say again the Hail Mary three times in his honor." No sooner had they finished saying this prayer than the good old woman died.

An Extraordinary Cure.

To the Editor of the London *Tablet*, Feb. 16th, 1884.

Sir:—So very interesting an occurrence has taken place here, that I will beg of you to let the Catholic world know it through your journal. About a quarter of an hour's drive from my home in Trieste, there is a poor, *very poor*, orphanage. There is a grand one in the town, supported and looked after by all the great ladies, but mine was set on foot by a poor Capuchin; it is an old, lone, deserted house, looking on a bay, where he has collected all the orphan waifs and strays who were starving on the streets, or on the mountains without any arm to protect them. He began it a few years ago, and this humble but neat and clean home, is put under the care of a very simple, poor, but saintly woman of the lower classes, named Giovanna, aided by three of her own disciples. Here thirty-three orphans are fed, and lodged, and clothed, and taught to read, write, do sums, catechism, plain work, washing, ironing, cooking, and to clean and keep the house and garden in order, and when they are old enough, suitable places are found for them to gain a livelihood.

I do not remember the precise date that the following event took place, but it was about the 11th of January, 1884. One of the children, named Antonietta, had been long very ill, and was at last confined to her bed. The details of the sickness, dates, and hours would take too long to tell you. I will briefly say that her sufferings in head, stomach, and chest were so great that she lay beating these parts of her body with both hands, and that she tore the clothes of those who came near her. The doctor and the priest both wished to send her to the hospital, but the good woman Giovanna begged so hard that this last evil might be deferred. She was too young for confession and communion, and the priest with difficulty gave her extreme unction; as I afterwards heard, she nearly tore his stole to bits. At last, after some days, she lay quite still, her arms crossed on her breast, and could not see, hear, speak, nor feel, her tongue protruded from her mouth, which it filled (so swollen was it that they wondered how she breathed), and her teeth were locked upon it, so that it was all bleeding and almost bitten in two. The bigger children took turns in pairs to watch by the body with candles lighted, to assemble the little community for the prayers for the departing soul. The doctor and priest said it was only a case of a few hours, but this state had been going on for several days, I think from Monday to Friday, and they had not been able to give her any nourishment whatever, her teeth being locked. At last those below heard a cry from the watchers above, and one and all flew up stairs—Antonietta had put out a hand from the apparently *almost* dead body, and made a motion of writing. They brought her some holy water—she did not touch it, and went on

writing—they brought a pencil and paper, and she wrote without moving, except the hand: "I see a procession of men like splendid soldiers, in red, and the principal of them is an old man wearing a crown and carrying a lily."

Several times that morning she made the motion of writing, and each time they gave her pencil and paper, her hand wrote the same. All of a sudden there was a fresh cry from the watchers, and the entire household again flew up. Antonietta sat up in bed with her eyes closed, and murmured Giuseppe! Giuseppe—Joseph! Joseph! She stretched out her hand, and took something invisible from an invisible person, and she rubbed first one eye and then the other with it. Then she took some more and put it into her mouth, and ate it, the teeth unlocked for the purpose; then she clasped her hands in prayer, and presently opened her eyes. Seeing the whole little community around her, she bounded up, and exclaimed: "I am cured! I am well! St. Joseph came to me. He told me to rub my eyes with his lily, and to eat some, and to pray. I want to get up and dress and go down to the church and thank him before the altar." The children all fell on their knees, and began crying, a miracle, a miracle. I have just come from there, I often go, and Giovanna, whom I have known for ten years, told me she was *so overcome*, yet she wanted to keep the children quiet, lest it was a *mistake*. She exclaimed: "Antonietta, you must not talk, you must get into bed. The doctor said you were to be kept *very* quiet." But the child said laughing, "there is no need! I am well! I am cured! I must dress and go down. *He* told me I must," and she ran about the room picking up whatever she could find to dress with. Then they saw she was straight

and well, with a beautiful color, laughing eyes, the tongue small and red, and no sign of having been bitten and black; they brought her food and dressed her, and the whole house went to the chapel, a room in the house, with her to return thanks. The doctor was expected soon after, and the child wanted to go down and open the door for him, but Giovanna insisted she should sit on her bed, dressed, and waiting, and they were all present.

When he arrived, he exclaimed: "I don't see the sick child. Have you sent her away? Is she dead?" "*Here I am*," she said, laughing in his face. The doctor became rigid like a stone, and for five or six minutes he uttered no word. At last he was able to speak, and they told him of every circumstance, and he replied: "As I am a Christian, I am compelled to declare that this is something supernatural—for *naturally* she *must* have died this day—and even if *I* had made what we might call an almost miraculous cure of the body, she must have remained deaf, dumb, and blind, or at least an idiot—it was a very bad meningitis. Yet here she is rosy and well as any child in the orphanage."

The Bishop has been to see her, and many others. I sat with Giovanna and the child for a long time, apart from the others, and heard it all from both. The child is so young and innocent she almost wonders *why* we take so much notice of her. The Bishop means the month of March to be kept with great devotion there, and the child is to make her first communion on St. Joseph's feast, the 19th. I want to tell my fellow-Catholics in England, as I have the advantage of being close by, of two things which struck me very forcibly. The child was alone with me for a short while, and she

came and stood at my knee. Her bright, black eyes looked thoughtful for a moment, and she said: "Signora, whenever you want to get anything from St. Joseph, call him 'St. Joseph, the friend of the Sacred Heart of Jesus,' and he can't refuse you." Another remark was Giovanna's: "Signora (she said), every one is so struck with this miracle, but this house is a perpetual *living* miracle. We are thirty-seven souls—thirty-three children and four superintendents—in this home. We have no fund—not a farthing in the world; and we often do not know how we shall get to-morrow's dinner, but one kind person sends a little, and some devout client of St. Joseph another little thing, and we always manage to exist in a small way." Now I have not said one word of my idea to anybody, and they have not an idea of my helping them beyond my usual few florins; but I have been thinking that if any Catholics in England who need some favor from St. Joseph would like to write their petitions in a little sealed up note, and to send me a little contribution to that poor but holy house, I would take the sealed note and the contribution, and give the *latter* to Giovanna, and all the former to be put in a vase on the altar of St. Joseph during the whole month of March, and on the 19th to have a *special Mass* said for them, and the little girl who has been so favored to offer them, and make *all the children* pray for them. If the idea finds favor address me—Mrs. Richard Burton, British Consulate, Trieste, Austria. Inside write, "for St. Joseph," and remember *stamps* and *P. O. orders* are no use here; only cheques, notes, and bills.

I have already made similar arrangements for my own petitions, and shall probably pass the greater part

of the month of March there, and certainly the 19th, St. Joseph's feast.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

ISABEL BURTON.

Trieste, February 6th, 1884.

About the year 1875 a mission was given in the Church of the Paulist Fathers on 59th St., in New York. At that time there lived in Manhattanville a mother who had two children, a boy and girl. They were Protestants. One evening the mother, as she felt lonesome, went with her children to listen to a mission sermon in that Church. The missionary happened to preach on devotion to St. Joseph, explaining in a popular and attractive way the reasons why Catholics should nourish a great devotion to St. Joseph. He related several instances of the powerful intercession of this saint in heaven, instances of great temporal and spiritual blessings which he had obtained for those who had had recourse to his intercession.

The Protestant lady and her children, not understanding this doctrine of the Catholic Church, laughed at it and made fun of it. As soon as the sermon was over, they left the Church to go home. The road from 59th St. to Manhattanville was at that time rather lonesome. As it was very late in the evening they took the city car. The other few passengers soon left the car, and a little while after three ruffians stepped in and sat down opposite the Protestant lady and her children. Seeing them richly dressed, they began to use insulting language, and wanted to put out the light in the car. As the place was very lonesome, the mother and her children were afraid to leave the car. They were in great perplexity,

not knowing what to do. At last the little boy said to his mother: "Ma, let us do as the priest said in the church; let us pray to St. Joseph, that he may help us. So they prayed to this glorious saint the best way they could, and in a few moments an old gentleman got on the car; he was standing on the platform with the conductor, and on seeing how frightened the lady and her children were, he stepped into the car and stood between the ruffians and the lady, to whom he said: "Be not alarmed; I will protect you," and to the ruffians who continued their insulting language, he said in an authoritative voice: "Stop this language, and keep quiet." These words silenced them and soon after they left the car. But as the lady and her children were still greatly afraid to leave the car, the old gentleman said to them: "Be no longer afraid; I will accompany you and protect you until you have reached your home." Now when they had come to the steps of their house they turned around to thank the old gentleman for his great kindness; but he had suddenly disappeared. They now felt sure that it was St. Joseph who had protected them. Next day they went back to the priest and told them all that had happened to them, and declared themselves ready to become Catholics. The priest then instructed them and received them into the Church.

Some years ago a vessel with many passengers on board made shipwreck near the Azores Islands, where there is no safe harbor. Three hundred passengers perished in the sea. Two religious who were on board of the same vessel, took hold of a wreck, on which they were floating for three days. At last St. Joseph appeared between them and saved them.

A certain pious virgin used to go very early to one of our churches in Holland. She had to cross a very lonesome place. She placed all confidence in the protection of St. Joseph. One morning a young man followed her very closely. As she was frightened, she prayed to St. Joseph to protect her. All on a sudden the young man saw an old, venerable man walking along with the young lady. He felt terrified and retraced his steps.

CHAPTER XV.

The Necessity and Power of Faith in Order to attain Perfection.

1. *The necessity of faith.* "Sine fide impossible est placere Deo." (Heb. xi, 6.) Without faith it is impossible to please God, that is, impossible to lead a virtuous life and attain eternal happiness. Faith not only proposes certain mysteries to our intellect, but also lays down fixed moral principles for our will. These moral principles are most intimately united with the mysteries of faith, so that one necessarily influences the other. He, for instance, that does not believe in hell, has no fear of hell, and consequently will not avoid those crimes that necessarily deserve hell. Faith is therefore the foundation of all virtue. This is especially true of the priest. "Justus meus ex fide vivit." It is especially to him that God says by the mouth of his Prophet: "Sponsabo te mihi in fide, et scies quia ego Dominus." (Os. ii, 20.) The priest's intimate relations with God are based on faith. A priest without faith is indeed but a corpse: "Corpus sine anima." (St. James.) The priest must not only have faith like ordinary Christians,he must be thoroughly imbued with the spirit of faith. In a word, his every thought, word, and action must show that he is not a mere animal man, but in reality another Christ, "alter Christus."

The priest, who is imbued with the spirit of faith regards everything as God regards it. He looks upon poverty, and riches, sickness and health, honor and reproach, not

according to the maxims of the world, but according to the maxims of the saints, the maxims of the Gospels. He alone who is imbued with the spirit of faith can say with the Apostle: "Vivo ego jam non ego, vivit vero in me Christus." (Gal. ii, 20.) The beginning, the continuation and the end of a good priest's life is, properly speaking, one continued act of faith. The very act of becoming a priest is, in itself, a great act of faith, and requires great faith.

"Credere opportet accedentem ad Deum." (Heb. xi, 6.) We certainly never made a greater act of faith than when we cast ourselves at the feet of the bishop, and repeated the words of the psalmist: "Dominus pars hæreditatis meæ." (Ps. 15.) In that moment we freely separated ourselves from the world and consecrated ourselves irrevocably to God. Perhaps one or the other hesitated long before taking the final step. The world unfolded before him its brilliant pleasures and whispered of a life of freedom and honor and joy; or perhaps he was terrified at the thought of a life-long vow, terrified at the awful responsibilities, or perhaps tortured by the fear that after all he was not called to the priesthood; but his faith overcame every obstacle, every allurement of the world, every temptation of Satan—hæc est victoria quæ vincit mundum, fides nostra; (I. John v, 4) and he offered himself to God as a willing victim. And after the sacrifice was completed, after he had consecrated himself irrevocably to God, he cried out with a joyful heart: "Funes ceciderunt mihi in proclaris." (Ps. 15.) Never could we have made this heroic act of self-sacrifice without a lively faith.

To him that has faith all things are possible. "Omnia possibilia sunt credenti." (Matt. ix, 22.) If the thought

that we are priests, consecrated to God, no longer fills our heart with joy, wherein does the fault lie? Surely it cannot be that any one of us entered the priesthood without being called thereto, or chose that holy state from unworthy motives. The advice of St. Augustine to such an unhappy man is, I confess, not very consoling: "Si vocatus non es, fac ut voceris." The only hope of salvation of such a one is in prayer, penance, and fidelity to the obligations he has taken upon himself. The cause of this want of happiness in our vocation is rather the lack of that lively faith that filled and elevated us on the day of our ordination. Has not one or the other among us perhaps been guided, at times, not by the spirit of faith, but rather by selfish and worldly motives? Now, he who acts not according to the spirit of God, but from merely human motives, loses at last that unction, that interior peace and consolation which the Holy Ghost is wont to give to those who are faithful to his inspirations. The priest is the "light of the world." Now the oil that nourishes this light is faith. Without faith we can have no merit, no virtue, no perfection.

Without faith there is no merit. Our actions to be meritorious must proceed from supernatural motives, but to act through supernatural motives, we must have faith. "Uniuscujusque opus, quale sit, ignis probabit," says St. Paul. (Rom. xi, 16.) Only those works that are built on the foundation of faith can withstand the fire. Those that are based on merely human motives shall turn to dust. The priest, by his consecration, belongs exclusively to God; he should therefore live only for God and seek and desire only his holy will. He who acts

only out of interested motives, can expect but little reward from God. Habebit gloriam suam, sed non apud Deum." (Rom. iv, 2.)

Without faith there is no *supernatural virtue.* No building can exist long without a foundation; in like manner, no supernatural virtue can exist or remain without faith. The priest is called to a life of perfection; he must possess every virtue in an eminent degree. Now no one can even strive after virtue without the spirit of faith. St. Thomas says that humility is indeed necessary in order to remove that pride of intellect which is an obstacle to faith; but, since God is the end of man's existence, the theological virtues hold the foremost place, and as faith is addressed to the intellect, while hope and charity affect the will, faith must be looked upon as the foremost, the very foundation of all virtues. Our every day experience proves the truth of the assertion that without faith there can be no supernatural virtue. "We have to fight not only against flesh and blood," as the Apostle assures us, "but also against the spirits of darkness in the air." (Eph. vi, 12.) Every day, every moment, our virtue is tried. Every moment the invisible enemy hurls at us his fiery darts, capable of inflaming all the fiercest passions of our heart. In this combat, only the weapons of faith can avail us. "Propterea accipite armaturam Dei;" says the Apostle, "ut possitis resistere in die mala, et in omnibus perfecti stare. In omnibus sumentes scutum fidei, in quo possitis omnia tela nequissimi ignea extinguere." (16) St. Peter, too, gives the same advice. "Adversarius vester diabolus, tanquam leo rugiens circuit quærens quem devoret, cui resistite fortes in *fide.*" (I. 5. 8.) Faith, therefore, lively faith is abso-

lutely necessary for the priest. How will the priest, for instance, without a strong and lively faith, conquer every temptation against the virtue of holy purity? Only he can conquer every temptation who can say with the prophet: "Oculi mei semper ad Dominum." (Ps. 24.) How will the priest, in the midst of so many trials, practise the virtues of patience, meekness, humility, obedience to his superiors and so on, unless he has continually before his eyes the example of Jesus who was obedient unto death, who was "meek and humble of heart," who even prayed for his tormentors? A priest without faith can form no idea of the sublime dignity of the priesthood, no idea of the perfection required of the priest.

A firm and lively faith is necessary especially *at the hour of death.*

He who has had but little or no faith during life, will certainly not be very firm at the hour of death. In that awful decisive moment all hell will be roused against him; he will be tempted to doubt and despair. If during life he has not acquired the habit of making frequent acts of faith, how will he be able to make such acts when he is dying?

True, he often recited the Creed: "Credo in Deum, Partrem omnipotentem, etc.; but how often did these words come from his heart? How often did he say them with attention and devotion? Ah! at the hour of death, he understands the meaning of these dread words he recited so often and so heedlessly, "Domine, quid multiplicati sunt, qui tribulant me!"

Multi dicunt animæ: non est salus ipsi in Deo ejus. (Ps. 3.) How calmly, on the contrary, does the faithful priest look forward to his last hour! He led a life of faith.

In all his trials and temptations he found strength and consolation in looking with the eyes of faith upon his divine model. Faith was his shield during life, it is now his shield in the dread hour of death.

Should the devil tempt him to discouragement, he replies in the words of the Apostle: "Scio, cui credidi." (II Tim. i, 12.) His guardian angel will say to him: "Beatus es, qui credidisti." (Luke i, 45.)

The Holy Ghost calls faith "donum electum." (Sap. iii, 14.) It is indeed an extraordinary grace—a grace which God gives only to those whom he loves. Faith here on earth is absolutely necessary for us if we wish to enjoy the vision of God forever in heaven.

1. *The Priest must have the spirit of faith to exercise properly his sacred functions.*

The priest who is not imbued with the spirit of faith, sees only in the sacred functions he performs, empty, unmeaning ceremonies—ceremonies that weary him by their multiplicity and by their frequent repetition. He, therefore, performs them mechanically, with little attention, and with no devotion. One can see that his heart is not in them.

Faith, a lively faith is necessary, in the first place, at the *altar*. The priest who says Mass without faith performs only a sacrilegious mockery. If he is not fully convinced of the awful dignity of the great sacrifice he is about to offer; if he does not believe that he stands at the altar as the representative of Christ, as the mediator between God and man, how can he be desirous to purify himself from every stain by a good confession?

He should by right be pure as the very angels that surround him, to be fit to touch the glorified Body of

Jesus, aye, to receive into his very being that sacred Body before whose dazzling splendors the angels veil their faces in trembling awe. But if he has no faith, he receives the God of glory into an impure heart—he is guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord; he eats and drinks his own damnation."

The priest who is penetrated with a lively faith, is filled with awe and reverence as he kneels before the Incarnate God at the moment of consecration; but the priest without faith—where are his thoughts at the solemn moment? O, if his thoughts were to take a visible shape, what and whom should we then see around him?

St. Teresa used to say, "For a simple rubric of the Church I am ready to lay down my life;" but the priest without faith, what does he care for the rubrics of the Church? In his eyes exactness in observing the rubrics is a sign of littleness and narrow-mindedness. O how many sins does such a priest commit even while offering the very sacrifice of impetration! The terrible words of the prophet: "Maledictus qui facit opus Domini fraudulenter," (Jer. xlviii, 10,) make no impression upon him.

Does the faithless priest perhaps spend a few moments after Mass in thanking and praying to him who has condescended to enter his heart? Will he spend these precious moments in begging for all the graces that he needs and in praying for those souls that are confided to his care? Unhappy man! he has no faith. He is an actor, not a priest.

Ah! with what reverence and devotion did we celebrate our first Mass? Where is that devotion now?

"Domine adauge in nobis fidem." "Spiritu principali confirma me."

2. *The priest must have the spirit of faith also in administering the sacraments*; otherwise the very act which brings blessings on the faithful will bring malediction on himself. In the sacraments, too, the bodily eye sees only outward signs. The effects of the sacraments are spiritual and can be seen only with the eye of faith.

True, the faithful priest sometimes sees the effects of God's grace, especially in the great sacraments of Penance and Communion; and this sight encourages him in his labors; but what encouragement and consolation can the faithless priest find in the tedious and difficult duties of his state? With what patience or gentleness does he treat those who are so dear to God—the children, the poor, and the ignorant? With what care does he pronounce the sacramental words? Does he not omit important rubrics in administering the sacraments? Does he always pay attention even to that which is essential?

3. *The Priest must have the spirit of faith in announcing the Word of God.*

Great is the power of God's word when there is no obstacle either on the part of the priest or of the people. "Are not my words like a fire, saith the Lord, and like a hammer that crushes the rocks?" (Jer. xxiii, 29.)

The word of God melts and transforms like a strong fire. It transformed a publican into an apostle. Dominus dabit verbum evangelizantibus virtute multa." (Ps. 67.) Vox Domini in virtute, vox Domini in magnificentia" (Ps. 28.) Vox Domini confringentis cedros."

The word of God casts down the towering cedars; it humbles the proud, self-conceited sinner. "Vox Domini concutientis desertum." The voice of God awakens the desert; it causes to bloom with the life of grace, those souls that were dead in sin like a dreary desert.

"Sufficit unus homo fidei zelo succensus," says St. John Chrysostom, "totum corrigere populum." (Hom. I. ad, Pop.) And the reason is because it is not a mere man who speaks; it is Jesus Christ himself who speaks through the priest. "In me loquitur Christus," says St. Paul. (II. Cor. xiii, 3.) Our Lord says the same thing in the plainest language: "It is not you who speak," said he to his Apostles, "it is the spirit of my Father that speaks through you."

The faithless priest, however, is but "a sounding brass and tinkling cymbal." He does not speak from his heart. His sermons bear little or no fruit. He therefore preaches but seldom, preaches without preparation; or, if he does prepare it is not to win souls to God, but to win a little praise or flattery.

II. *Power of Faith.* The faithless priest soon loses courage when he sees all the obstacles and difficulties that surround him. The faithful priest, on the contrary, knows indeed his own weakness, but he confides in the goodness of God. He says with the Apostle, "Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat." By his strong and lively faith he becomes a sharer in God's own almighty power. God has promised everything to him that asks with faith. "Quæcunque petieritis in oratione credentes," he says, "accipietis." (Matt. xxi, 22.) One day, as the Gospel tells us, our Lord cursed a barren fig tree and instantly it withered. St. Peter was filled

with astonishment at the sight. "Habete fidem Dei," said Jesus to him, that is, have a firm, unwavering faith such as God deserves. "Amen, amen dico vobis, quia quicuncque dixerit huic monti: tollere mittere in mare, et non hæsitaverit in corde suo, sed crediderit, fiet ei." (Matt. xi.) We see a practical illustration of this in the life of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus.

St. James clearly teaches the same doctrine: "Si quis vestrum indiget sapientia," he says, "postulet a Deo, qui dat omnibus affluenter et non improperat et dabitur ei. Postulet autem in fide, nihil hæsitans." (James i, 5.)

If, therefore, our prayers are not always heard, it is certainly not God's fault. He is infinitely rich. "Dives in omnes, qui invocant illum," as St. Paul says, (Rom. x, 12.) the fault must be our own. We do not pray with a firm, lively faith: "Credentes nihil hæsitantes."

It is true, we must also pray with perseverance; but if we have not a firm faith, we will not persevere long in prayer. Our Lord himself speaks again and again of the necessity of faith. In almost every case, he granted favors and wrought miraculous cures according to the faith of those who petitioned him. How often did he say: "Fides tua te salvum fecit." He cured the paralytic on account of the faith of his friends. "Videns Jesus fidem illorum, dixit paralitico; confide, fili." (Matt. ix, 2.) He granted the request of the Chananean woman on account of her great faith. "O mulier, magna est fides tua." (Matt. xv, 28.) He granted the petition of the Centurion on account of his faith, "Non inveni tantam fidem in Israel." (Matt. viii, 10.) How often does our Lord reproach his disciples with their want of faith? "Quid timidi estis, modicæ fidei?" (Matt. viii, 26.)

"Necdum habetis fidem." (Matt. iv, 40). He bestows his gifts according to our faith. "Secundum fidem vestram fiat vobis." (Matt. ix, 29). "Sicut credidisti, fiat tibi." (Matt. viii, 13). "Si quid potes, adjuva nos," is the prayer of the poor man whose son was tormented by the devil. And our Lord's answer was, "Si potes credere. Omnia possibilia sunt credenti. (Matt. ix, 22.)

And what strength does not the gift of a lively faith impart to our will? It raises us above ourselves and enables us to do almost the impossible. "Fides Christianorum," says Tertullian, "fides impossibilium."

Sometimes faith restrains us by fear; its menaces subdue and enchain our passions. Faith teaches us that, if we sin, God himself will be our enemy, God himself will avenge our crime. Faith teaches us that, unless we repent, a death of despair and an eternal hell await us. Surely enough to check the wildest passions. And to escape so terrible a fate, shall we not find sweet the hardships of virtue and the austerities of penance? "Hæc quam dulcia meditanti flammas." (St. Bernard).

Sometimes faith encourages us by the most certain and magnificent promises. Torrents of delights, a kingdom of glory, a happiness which leaves nothing to desire and nothing to fear. Our heart is inflamed by this glorious prospect. We forget the hardships of this world and think only of the happiness that awaits us. "Si labor terret, merces invitet." (St. Aug.)

Speaking of the triumphs of the saints of the Old Testament, St. Paul praises only the firmness and liveliness of their faith. "Fide Abel! . . . fide Enoch! . . fide qui vocatur Abraham, obedivit! . . . Per fidem vicerunt regna, operati sunt justitiam . . . extinxerunt impetum ignis . . . lapidati sunt, secti sunt . . . (Heb. xi.)

But what prodigies of courage and magnanimity were performed by the faith of St. Paul himself! And from the commencement of the Church even to our own time, what sublime virtues, what heroic devotion have been produced by faith! The history of the Apostles, the martyrs, the virgins, and in fact of all the saints, is indeed nothing but the history of human infirmity, triumphing by the strength drawn from a lively faith. It was their lively faith that sustained so many priests in the most dangerous temptations, where one false step would have hurled them into an abyss of untold misery. It was their lively faith that enabled so many generous souls to break the ties of flesh and blood and consecrate themselves irrevocably to the service of God. In a word, all the great, the heroic sacrifices that we read of in the lives of the saints—all are but the fruit of their lively faith; for faith is the foundation of every virtue.

The priest who is gifted with a lively faith, shows his faith in all his words and actions. The truths of faith animate him in all the details of life. He has for his principle of action the Holy Ghost—the spirit of Jesus Christ. It is no more he who lives; it is Jesus Christ who lives in him. Accordingly, he judges of the things of this world even as Jesus Christ himself judges of them. He fears only that which faith teaches him to fear. He desires only those things which faith tells him to wish for. He hopes only for that which faith teaches him to hope for. He loves, and hates, and despises all that faith teaches him to love, to hate, and to despise. What does he say of the riches of this world? He says with Jesus Christ: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. v, 3); and, "Woe to

you that are rich, for you have your consolation." (Luke vi, 24).

What does he say of the honors of this world? He says with Jesus Christ: "Woe to you when men shall bless you." (Luke vi, 26).

What does he say of the wisdom of this world? He says with St. Paul: "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." (1 Cor. iii, 19). And with Jesus Christ he says: "Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven."

What does he think of the pleasures of this world? He says with Jesus Christ: "Woe to you that now laugh, for you shall mourn and weep." (Luke vi, 25). "Watch ye, therefore, because you know not at what hour the Lord will come." (Matt. xxiv, 42).

What does he say of old age? With the Holy Ghost, he says: "Venerable old age is not that of long time, nor counted by the number of years, but a spotless life is old age." (Wisdom iv, 8).

What does he say of the trials, the persecutions, and the injustice of this world? He says with Jesus Christ: "Blessed shall ye be when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Be glad in that day and rejoice, for behold your reward is great in heaven." (Luke vi, 22).

The priest who is endowed with a lively faith, thinks, judges, and acts according to the truths of the Gospel and the principles of Jesus Christ. Faith is the life of the just man. It is the life of his intellect; for his mind is enlightened by the truths of faith. It is the life of his heart; for faith fills his heart with sentiments of justice

and holiness; it is the light of his works, for faith renders his works meritorious for all eternity.

The good priest is afraid and suspicious of novelties in doctrine, or practice, or devotion. "Theology, or the science of God," says Cardinal Manning, "is a divine tradition, running down from the beginning, ever expanding, and rising in its unity and symmetry to perfection. It is built up, indeed, of things old and new; but the new are, as Vincent of Lerins said, *non nova, sed nove.* The coins of the Roman, the Byzantine, the British Empire have new and various images and superscriptions, but the gold is all one. So the definitions of the truth may be new, but the truth is old. It is the restless sea of human intellect casting up mire and darkness that forces the Church to make new dykes and to guard the faith with new definitions.

"But some minds are weary of old truths, old terms, old phrases, old modes of teaching, old prayers, old devotions. They need the stimulus of novelty: new colors, new forms, new ways of stating old doctrines. It is with doctrines as with fashions: they must be always changing. Critics and authors, professors and preachers, often have a craving for originality. To be like their forefathers is to be commonplace; to strike out new lines, new ways of putting old truths, makes a reputation. It is only the Church that can revise the sacred terminology of faith. She alone "can bring forth things old and new." All other innovations are departures from the beaten path, which is safe because beaten, and beaten because it is the way of our forefathers in the faith. What is true in theology is more evidently true in the interpretation of the sacred Scripture. The love of

novelty is always at work to find new meanings; and criticism is impatient of restraint. We live in an age of unlimited intellectual liberty. Priests read without scruple or hesitation books and writings which fall under the rules of the Index. The habit of intellectual independence is easily formed. We are surrounded by both Gnostics and Agnostics: by those who out of their own consciousness are wiser than the Church, and by others who measure what can be known by what they know. Catholics would not consciously listen to either of these schools of error; and yet they are continually and unconsciously taking in their erroneous premises and principles, and assumptions in their daily contact with the world. As to false theology and false interpretation of Scripture, they would be upon their guard; but they are off their guard in philosophy, and readily open their ears and their intellect to the aberrations of modern metaphysics. They think that as in philosophy there is no heresy, so there need be no fear. But a false philosophy undermines faith, and one philosophical error, like a rotten beam, will loosen the whole superstructure of theology. Priests have of all men need to be upon their guard, for they are the guides and teachers of the faithful. It is dangerous to receive and to propagate the least intellectual error. We have need to live in great watchfulness against what is glorified as "modern thought." The thought of the modern world is setting steadily away from God. The love of novelty is one of its signs, and the only adequate corrective is the *donum scientiæ*, the gift of science or knowledge, which sees God in all things, and all things in God. With this light we traverse the whole world of abstract or applied sciences without hesitation or fear."

We must ever be mindful that, whenever the interests of truth are involved, Catholicity is essentially intolerant. "*One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God.*" (Ephes. iv.)

A priest ought to adopt with perfect confidence every practice which the Church recommends, and to obey her regulations with filial submission. He listens to no murmuring against the severity of the law, to no restless inquiries into the motive for it, to no censorious reflections upon whether it is opportune ; to none of those phrases which are heard from the lips of rebels only : "It is a piece of tyranny, downright despotism—altogether arbitrary."

The encyclical letter of his Holiness Pius IX, (21st of March, 1853) and its condemnation of the anonymous pamphlet entitled, *Sur la situation présente de l'Eglise gallicane relativement au droit coutumier*, show us clearly enough what are the views and wishes of the Head of the Church with regard to certain opinions and certain practices.

"As the members are united to the head, so ought we to be united to our Head, the Roman Pontiff, and to the Apostolic Chair, from which we should seek to learn what to believe, what to think, and what to hold." (*S. Cyril of Alexandria*).

As this lively faith is a gift of inestimable value, Jesus Christ wishes that we should ask for it again and again without ceasing. Pray, therefore, for a lively faith until you have obtained it ; and when you have obtained this great gift, continue to pray that it may never be taken from you. Offer this prayer especially during Mass. Hear Mass frequently, and, especially at the time between the consecration and the communion, beseech Jesus Christ

to grant your petition, and doubt not in the least that you will obtain it.

A young cleric once heard a missionary preach on the Real Presence, and on the great love of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. The preacher spoke with as lively a faith as if he saw Jesus Christ with his eyes. The young man was struck at this, and said to himself: "O my Lord! what will become of me? I, too, must one day preach on thy Presence in the Holy Eucharist; but how feeble will my words be in comparison with the words of this pious priest!" The young man related this afterwards, and he added that, from that time forward, he always begged of Jesus Christ the gift of a lively faith in the Real Presence, and that he did so frequently during Mass, particularly at the time of the elevation. By this means his faith became so strong that he afterwards besought our Lord *not* to appear to him in any sensible manner; and he could find nowhere so much joy and contentment of heart as in a church where the Blessed Sacrament was preserved.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Spirit of Humility.

In order to obtain more effectually the divine assistance in his office, a pastor must practise exterior and interior humility. The following considerations will strongly induce him to practise this two-fold humility.

"It is the duty of a pastor," says Balthasar Alvarez, S. J., "to serve souls, for whom Jesus Christ has shed his blood; for the love of God he must serve them as a servant serves his master. Although his services in themselves may be of trifling value, yet he will win heaven by them, if he renders them cheerfully and promptly, and without any expectation of gratitude. Let him, therefore, consider that God, when he made him a pastor of souls, did not appoint him to be a master over his brethren; that God placed them upon his shoulders rather than at his feet; and gave them consequently a right to his services. This is a truth of our holy faith. "Even as the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." (Matthew, xx, 28.) "Have they made thee ruler? Be not lifted up: be among them as one of them." (Eccl. xxxii, 1.) "He that believeth in me, the works that I do, he shall do also, and greater than these shall he do." (John, xiv, 12.) Let Superiors learn from this to leave to their subjects what is more honorable and to keep for themselves what is less esteemed in the eyes of men. This manner of acting will gain for them the esteem, submission and gratitude of

their subjects and the applause of seculars. It is thus that they will do more good through their subjects than if they were to do it themselves.

After St. Ignatius of Loyola was made General of his Order, he publicly taught the Catechism, nobly yielding the pulpit to his companions and subjects. He made it a rule, that the Rectors of the Society should teach Catechism in public when they entered upon their office.

"I could never act as some do," said St. Francis de Sales, "who as soon as they are raised to any dignity, try to enforce the honor due to them, and who will not deign to sign themselves in their letters, 'Your most humble servant,' unless they are writing to persons above them in rank. As for myself, it is hard for me to make any difference between those to whom I write. All bear the likeness of their Creator, and I subscribe myself to every one; 'Your most humble servant;' unless, indeed, my letter is addressed to Peter or Francis, my servants, who might think I was jesting with them, were I to use this expression."

"I have remarked," says Peter Camus, speaking of St. Francis de Sales, "that when any one, even of the lowest rank visited him, the holy Bishop assumed the demeanor of an inferior in the presence of his Superior, receiving his visitor with the greatest kindness, listening to, and conversing with him, without any regard to the loss of time or the little utility he might expect would be derived from the conversation." To submit to Superiors is justice; to submit to equals is friendship and politeness; but to submit to inferiors, is the peculiar characteristic of humility which tells us that, since we are nothing, we ought to cast ourselves at the feet of every one.

St. Jane Frances de Chantal relates that St. Francis de Sales appeared to her after his death, and thus addressed her: "My child, God has sent me to tell you that it is his will for you to be exceedingly humble."—One day when something that had been said in praise of her Order was repeated to her, she exclaimed: "Were it to come to my knowledge that vanity had crept into any of our houses, that it boasted of its connection with distinguished persons and was puffed up with pride at the favor of the great, I should be tempted to beg God to send down fire from heaven to destroy that convent. Perhaps it will be said that I know not of what spirit I am: but, if it were known what humility God requires of the members of our Order, and how much those resist the spirit of God who love the vanity of the world, every one would be of my opinion. Nothing would sooner shorten my life than to see vanity and disunion among the children of the Blessed Virgin."

St. Vincent de Paul also uses the same language. Writing to a priest, he says: "I do not at all agree with a certain person who said a few days ago that, in order to govern well and maintain our authority, we must show by our demeanor that we are the Superior. Ah! no: Christ, our Lord, did not speak in this manner. He taught the contrary by word and example, saying that he had come not to be served, but to serve others, and that he who wishes to be the master must become the servant of all. Let such be your sentiments, and act towards your subjects as if you were one of them. Live affectionately and simply with them, so that when you are seen together, no one will be able to tell which is the Superior. Tell them at once that you have not come to

rule over, but to serve them. You will do well to act in this manner, not only towards the members of your community, but also towards visitors.

"Moreover we must ascribe to God the good which we do by our means; whilst, on the contrary, we ought to attribute to ourselves the evil that occurs in the community. This will really be found to be the fact, if we only consider the matter well, for all disorders proceed from Superiors, either on account of their negligence or of their bad example. If the head is not healthy, the other members of the body will also suffer. In like manner should humility preserve you from that vain self-conceit which is apt to glide into honorable offices. Ah! how many good works are tainted by it! For God's sake, then, be on your guard against this fault which I believe to be the greatest impediment to progress in perfection. Accustom yourself, therefore, to have humble recourse to Jesus Christ; and openly confess that what you teach is not your own doctrine but that of the Gospel. In your instructions make use of the simple words and comparisons with which Jesus Christ spoke to the people. Oh! What wonders could he have taught, how many mysteries of the Godhead could he have revealed, since he was the Eternal Wisdom of the Father! And yet see how wisely he spoke, what common comparisons he made use of, for example, that of a father of a family, of a vine-dresser, of a grain of mustard-seed, &c. Learn from this how you ought to speak in order to be understood when you deliver the word of God."

St. Charles Borromeo was accustomed to rise early, wake up his servants and carry a light into their room. St. Francis de Sales also arose in the night to make his

fire, so as to spare his servant this trouble. "What we see," says St. Alphonsus, "makes more impression upon us than what we hear. Let a pastor inculcate humility ever so much by his words, if he does not by his example, by his manner of treating others, by forbearing charity and patience put in practice his own precepts, he will make but little impression and do but little good."

After St. Francis de Sales was made Bishop, the Abbé Déage, his old preceptor, continued to live with him, and urged by unreasonable zeal for the perfection of his former pupil, he used on every occasion to reprove the Saint with his customary dictatorial tone. If the holy Bishop happened to let a pleasant word escape from his lips in order to enliven the conversation and create mirth, Mr. Déage immediately reminded him that every word uttered by a Bishop ought to be serious and important. If he preached, Mr. Déage always found something to blame in his sermon. If he received visitors with a warm welcome, Mr. Déage quoted the proverb: "Familiarity breeds contempt." At other times, the old gentleman was offended because Francis did not become vexed; he thought himself injured because the man of God forgave injuries; he was constantly reproaching him with being too kind, saying that his kindness spoiled everything; and the humble Bishop cheerfully bore with this continual chiding, as if he were a little child.

St. Paul publicly rebuked St. Peter, his superior. (Gal. ii, 2.) On this occasion says St. Aug. (in Gal. ii, p. 949,) St. Peter sets us an example of wonderful and difficult virtue. For it is a much easier task for one to see what to reprehend in another and to put him in mind of a fault, than for us publicly to acknowledge our own

faults and to correct them. How heroic a virtue is it to be willing to be rebuked by another, by an inferior, and in sight of all the world?" "This example of Peter," says he in another place (serm. 350, ed. Ben.) is the most perfect pattern of virtue he could have set us, because by it he teaches us to preserve charity by humility." Every one can correct others; but only a saint can receive well public rebuke. This is the true test of perfect humility and heroic virtue: this is something far more edifying and more glorious than the most convincing apologies. St. Gregory the Great says of this conduct of St. Peter. (Hom. 18, in Ezech. p. 1294): "He forgot his own dignity for fear of losing any degree of humility. He afterward commended the epistles of St. Paul as full of wisdom, though we read in them something that seems derogatory from his honor. But this lover of truth rejoiced that all should know that he had been reproved and should believe the reproof was just."

"Pride," says St. Alphonsus, "makes a pastor odious to every one. It hinders his own sanctification as well as that of his subjects and prevents the maintenance of Christian discipline. It is from a spirit of humility that a pastor should practise an heroical degree of patience; that he should know how to endure all kinds of labor, trouble and contradictions, and always be gentle and kind to every one, trying to steer the little ship of his parish as well as possible.

Blessed Balthasar Alvarez used to say: "Pastors should, for the love of their brethren, forget themselves, sacrifice their rest, neglect their health, and in everything be harder on themselves than on others. They should also love a life of anxiety, and know how to sigh and

weep compassionately over the misfortune and misery of their parishioners when these do not faithfully comply with their duties. Murmuring and dislike will often be their reward. Moreover, they should, before God, weep over and bear with the faults, imperfections, irresolute conduct and sins of their brethren. But to grieve too much over the faults of others would be no sign of true zeal, but rather an indication of want of patience and forbearance, and would betray a narrow, cowardly heart. They ought to wait for the moment of grace, and in the meantime, pray, encourage, endure, compassionate, instead of showing displeasure, indignation or ill-humor. Thus they will imitate the manner in which Divine Providence proceeds. "Knowest thou not that the benignity (goodness and long-suffering) of God leadeth to penance?" (Romans, ii, 4.)

When a certain pastor was one day reasonably as he thought, grieving and complaining to God, that he was unfit to correct some parishioners of his, it pleased our Lord to undeceive him in the following manner. He saw a silver vessel containing a very small heart, which was drowning in a few drops of water and near this vessel he saw another, filled with water and containing so large a heart that the entire mass of water scarcely sufficed to wet it. Whilst he was thinking of what this vision could mean he heard the following words: "The heart that you see sinking in a few drops of water represents your own which at the slighest occurrence immoderately grieves; but the large heart that does not sink in spite of the quantity of water in the vessel represents the Lord's heart which, without being discouraged bears with idolaters, heretics, schismatics, the impious and all sinners,

awaiting the happy day of their conversion with the most admirable patience. Now this patience must be your model." Corrected by this vision, the priest became more lenient and changed his conduct towards his brethren. He had soon good reason to congratulate himself upon the change, since God made known to him shortly after, that all those whose faults had caused him so much sorrow and grief were predestined to eternal life and would be saved.

Now a pastor will preserve himself and be strengthened in the above-mentioned sentiments of exterior humility in proportion as these sentiments are joined with and proceed from exterior humility, to nourish and increase which he has but to make the following reflections in his daily meditation: "Much will be required of those to whom much has been given." Now, according to the Venerable Bede, "Much is committed to him, to whom, in addition to the care of his own spiritual welfare, is entrusted the duty of feeding his Master's flock." From such a one Jesus Christ will require much; that is to say, he requires pastors to take particular care of the spiritual welfare of their subjects, whose salvation and sanctification will be in some measure their own. "It is affectionate *care* for his subjects and not their *cure*," (*cura non curatio*) says St. Bernard, "that God requires of the pastor."

The latter is often impossible on account of the nature or mental indisposition, imperfection or obstinacy of the subjects. "This account," says Titus, "which is to be rendered by teachers, pastors and others in authority is not a matter of little importance, but a most serious and fearful affair. Wherefore let them not take pride in their rank and office, but let them rather discharge their

duties and feed their flocks with greater humility, zeal and diligence." In the place above cited, St. Gregory says, "He who knows that he has to give a stricter account of the gifts which he has received ought to be so much the more humble and prompt in the service of God."

The care of souls which Popes, Bishops, Pastors and Superiors undertake, is an immense and terrible charge, says the Council of Trent. Let them humble themselves and fear exceedingly; for they carry a great burden and live in a state of servitude. It was for this reason that St. Gregory called himself the "Servant of the servants of God," and succeeding Popes have followed his example. Speaking of Popes, Adrian IV said: "No one is more worthy of pity than the Roman Pontiff: no condition do I compassionate more than his. The joy and happiness of his whole life is nothing but bitterness. His throne is a thorny seat; his path is sown all over with briers, and so great is the weight of the burden he bears, that it would oppress and bend the strongest shoulders."

Upon the tombstone of Adrian VI, we read the following inscription: "Here lies Adrian VI, who never thought life more unhappy than when he had to govern." When Pius V was elected Pope, he turned pale and trembled. On being asked the cause of his agitation he answered: "Whilst I was living in the monastery, occupied alone with God and myself, I had the greatest hope of my salvation; when I was made Bishop and Cardinal, I began to fear for it; now I almost despair of it."

"A nation," said Our Lord one day to Blessed Balthasar Alvarez, "is always good when it is governed by a good ruler. A shepherd is a model for his flock; *it is*

this very thing that makes his office so awful. His flock keep their eyes fixed upon him and adopt his habits. A good shepherd promotes the welfare of his flock; it is therefore a great blessing when God gives a good ruler to his people. Let a pastor, then, in order to keep himself humble, bear in mind, that the care of a parish is a heavy burden, and that all his efforts to direct it according to the spirit of the Church will be of little avail, unless he is strengthened and guided by the grace of God. Indeed, what is more difficult than to govern men of different dispositions and at the same time to keep them humble and faithful in their duties? Truly this is no human task! God himself must put his hand to the work; for he alone can break the will of man and keep it in subordination.

Be then humble, and you will be strong enough to bear your burden; for "God giveth grace to the humble," (James iv, 6.) He is their light, their courage, their strength, their support, their counseller, and their all.

CHAPTER XVII.

Chastity of the Priest.

The Holy Ghost says to every human being: "Nolite fieri sicut equus et mulus, quibus non est intellectus." (Ps. 31, 9.) St. Paul says to every Christian: "Sciat unusquisque vestrum vas suum possidere in sanctificatione et honore. Non enim vocavit nos Deus in immunditiam." (I Thess. iv, 4.)

The chastity of the priest, however, is unspeakably higher than that of the ordinary Christian. Of the sublime, perpetual chastity of the priest Our Lord says: "Non omnes capiunt verbum istud, sed quibus datum est. (Matt. xix, 11.)

Now God calls no one to any state or office without giving him at the same time the necessary graces. "Illos quos ad aliquid elegit Deus," says St. Thomas, "ita præparat, ut ad id ad quod eliguntur, inveniantur digni." (Part. 2, Qu. 27.)

Chastity is especially necessary for the priest. "Sit humilis sacerdos," says St. Thomas Villanova (de div. Aug. Conc. 3), "sit devotus; si non est castus, nihil est."

Even the heathens, as Plutarch assures us, required their priests to lead pure lives because, as he says, "Diis omnia munda." Plato also tells us that in Athens the priests lived in separate dwellings. "Ne contagione aliqua, eorum castitas labefactatur." "O grandis christianorum miseria," exclaims St. Augustine; "ecce pagani doctores fidelium facti sunt." (Ad fratr. in eremo. 3, 27.)

How great was the purity which God required of his

Levites even in the Old Law. "Si in figura tanta observantia," says St. Ambrose, "quanta in veritate." (De off. I. c, 50.)

Every Christian and consequently every priest, is bound, by natural and divine law, to observe chastity according to his state of life. Now, the sacerdotal state requires that the priest should lead a life of unsullied chastity.

I. *Necessity of chastity. The chastity of the priest must be angelic on account of his intimate relation with God.*

The very name of the priest shows this. We are called "*clerics*" (clergymen), because we are the *portion* of the Lord who himself vouchsafes to be ours. "Christi estis, nempe de sorte Domini et ipse Dominus sors, pars scilicet vestra." (Conc. Mediol. iv.) God alone is our portion, our inheritance. "In sortem Domini vocati." God espouses the soul of the priest. He wishes to dwell forever in the heart of the priest. But if that heart loves some one else, perhaps even more than God, how can it be the portion of the Lord!

Every Christian, but especially every priest, is the temple of God. He becomes a temple of God in baptism, a temple of God in confirmation, a temple of God by the vow of perpetual chastity, a temple thrice holy and consecrated by the sacred unction, by the sacrament of Holy Orders. "Unxit nos Deus," says the Apostle, "et signavit nos." (II Cor. i, 2.) "Teipsum castum custodi," says the martyr S. Ignatius, "ut domum Dei, templum Christi." (Epist. ad Her. Diac.) The priest who dishonors his body, desecrates the consecrated temple of God. Of this God complains by the mouth of his prophet: "Sacerdotes contempserunt legem meam, et pol-

luerunt sanctuaria mea. Et coinquinabar in medio eorum." (Ezech. xxii, 26.) Deum in ipsis habitantem corrumpunt," says Clement of Alexandria, "quantum in se est, et vitiorum suorum conjunctione polluunt." (Paed. lib. 2. C, 10.)

The priest is the angel of the God of armies. "Angelus Domini exercituum est." (Malach. ii, 7.) Our Lord calls his Church, "The kingdom of heaven. Regnum cœlorum." Now as angels serve him in heaven, he wishes that his priests should serve him like angels also here on earth. The priest therefore should be pure like the angels of heaven. "Neque nubunt, neque nubentur, sed erunt sicut angeli Dei." (Matt. xxii, 30.)

The priest is the Father, the Creator, of his Saviour. "Pater Christi generando," says St. Bernard, "Mater Christi pariendo." Jesus is born again every day by our lips: "Parturiente lingua," says Tertullian. How pure is the generation of the Eternal Word in the bosom of the Father! How pure the birth of his Virginal Mother! Shall the priest then defile and dishonor this same Eternal Word by the foul breath of impurity?

II. *The priest must lead a chaste life because he is the representative, the vicar and ambassador of God on earth.*

How can we do honor to these beautiful titles unless our lives shine with the splendor of chastity? "Tales decet Dominum habere ministros, qui continentia castitatis splendeant." (St. August. Serm. 249 de Temp.) Unless we are chaste, how shall we represent him who could say to his most bitter enemies: "Quis ex vobis arguet me de peccato?" The enemies of our Lord sought to blacken his character by the vilest calumnies; but they never dared utter the least suspicion against the perfection of

his chastity. He suffers sinners to approach him, and his enemies say in their hearts that he does not know who they are, and that consequently he is not God. They doubt of his Divinity rather than of his spotless purity! And we, the priests of the God of purity, shall we represent him unless our chastity is beyond all suspicion?

III. *Our sacred functions also oblige us to lead lives of unsullied chastity.*

The most divine of all our functions is that which we perform at the altar. The Church sends the priest to the altar, "ut offerat dona et sacrificia pro peccatis." (Heb. v, 1.) But what gifts, what sacrifices, do we offer? What is the victim that we offer to the Almighty? Hostiam puram, hostiam sanctam, hostiam immaculatam. The priests of the Old Law offered on the altar of the Lord, sheep and oxen; and in order to be worthy to perform this sacred function, they were bound to practise continence as long as this divine service lasted. How great then must be the purity of him who holds in his hands, who sacrifices not sheep and oxen, but a victim as holy, as adorable as God himself?—a victim which is no other than the God of all purity! "Illius solius est offerre sacrificium, qui indesinenti et perpetuæ se devoverit castitati?" (Orig. Hom. 23. in lib. Num.)

Jesus wished to be born only of a virgin; he wished to be nursed and handled only by a virgin. How pure then should be the hands of the priest that touch him so often, how pure the heart of the priest that receives him so often! "Si Redemptor noster tantopere dilexit floridi pudoris integritatem, ut non modo de virginali utero nasceretur, sed etiam a nutritio virgine tractaretur, et

hoc, cum adhuc parvulus vagiret in cunis, a quibus nunc, bosecro, tractari vult corpus suum, cum jam immensus regnat in cœlis? (St. Pet. Dam. Opusc. 17. De cœlib. Sacerd.)

The priest is, moreover, the *mediator* between God and man. His duty is to pray for sinners and reconcile the sinner with God. His prayer should ascend as sweet incense to the throne of God. "Dirigatur, Domine, oratio mea sicut incensum in conspectu tuo." (Ps. 140.) "Elevatio manuum mearum sacrificium vespertinum." But how shall the priest lift up pure hands to God, if those hands are defiled by sin? How shall his prayer ascend as sweet incense, if it is uttered by sinful lips? "Qui in carne sunt, Deo placere non possunt," says St. Paul. (Rom. viii, 8.) This great Apostle advises even married persons to practise continence for a time at least, that they may be able to pray with more devotion. (I Cor. vii, 5.) He gives thereby to understand how great is the power of prayer when it ascends from chaste and loving hearts. He teaches us, moreover, how jealously those should guard this virtue, whose duty it is to recite the divine office; those who are constituted mediators between God and man; whose duty it is to avert the scourges which our sins deserve, and to draw down on the earth the blessings of God.

IV. *The priest is bound to lead a pure life on account of his intimate relations to the Faithful.*

The priest is the father of the faithful. "Per evangelium ego vos genui." (I Cor. iv, 15.) He has been made the minister of that mysterious generation which brings forth children to God. "The divine fecundity of the priest," says Bossuet, "may be compared with

that of the Blessed Mother of God. The one as well as the other requires a purity truly angelic, because Mary brought forth the Son of God, while the priest brings forth daily children to God." (Serm. pour la fete de la Visitation.) He brings forth children to God in holy baptism. He nourishes them by the word of God and by the sacraments. The pure priest is indeed a father; he elevates and sanctifies his children; but the impure priest is a murderer; he ruins those souls for whom Jesus has shed his blood.

The priest is the teacher of the faithful, the light of the world, the organ of the Holy Ghost. But how can the impure priest understand and explain to others "the mysteries of the kingdom of God? "Animalis homo non percipit ea quæ sunt spiritus Dei," says the Apostle. (I Cor. ii, 14.) How can he enkindle in the hearts of others that divine fire which does not burn in his own heart? "Qui prædicator constitutus est castitatis," says St. Peter Damien, "non te pudet servum esse libidinis." (Opusc. 17. c. 3.)

The priest is the spiritual *physician* of the faithful. In the holy sacrament of penance the priest has to heal the wounds of the soul, and especially the wounds caused by the shameful vice of impurity. But how shall he heal others when he himself is wounded? "Medice, cura te ipsum." How shall he extinguish the fire of lust in the hearts of others when his own heart is consumed by this hellish fire?

The priest has to hear confessions. He has to probe the inmost recesses of the human heart. He has to aid the timid, the shamefaced sinner. He has to listen to sins the very thought of which make the cheek tingle

with shame and horror. O how pure must he be not to be defiled with all this filth !

How careful the priest has to be in questioning, in instructing, especially in things pertaining to married life ! He must, it is true, learn the number, species and necessary circumstances of the sin, but how careful must he be never to ask unnecessary questions, never to yield to sinful curiosity, never to dwell on such subjects with "delectatione morosa !" Ah ! if the priest once gives way to this infamous passion, what can restrain him ? O God ! into what crimes does he fall ! sollicitatio, absolutio complicis, incest, murder, sacrilege ! O God, no wonder that Jesus wept tears of blood in his agony ! God pity the poor lamb that falls into the jaws of such a hellish wolf !

Every one, Protestants, Jews, infidels, even the most immoral wretches, every one expects the priest to be a model of purity.

When a man who has been living in sin for years, wishes to reform and make a good confession, he does not usually choose for his confessor a priest who has the name of being too free in his conduct. He usually chooses one who is noted for his virtue and for his patience with sinners.

V. *The holy Church requires every priest to lead a chaste, angelic life.*

The Church has made virginity the special virtue of the priesthood. The decrees of the popes and councils prove this clearly enough. "Nemo ad sacrum ordinem permittatur accedere," says Innocent III, "nisi virgo, aut probatæ castitatis existat." (C. a. Multis de cel. et qual. ord.) Every one who enters holy Orders knows

perfectly well that the Church requires him to lead a chaste, angelic life. He therefore assumes this obligation of his own free will.

Let us call to mind that solemn moment in which we promised God to be chaste all the days of our life. How great was the emotion of our heart at that imposing and touching ceremony! We approached the altar no longer in the mere clerical habit, as in preceding ordinations. We presented ourselves in the *Alb*, the symbol of innocence. In this robe the angels appeared at the sepulchre of Jesus: "In albis angeli." We stood before the throne of the Lamb: "Stantes ante thronum in conspectu Agni." The sacred vestments on our arm were like so many palms, representing the victories already gained over the world and over ourselves: "Et palmæ in manibus eorum." It was not a mere paternal allocution that the Bishop addressed to us; it was a formal condition (sine qua non) which he made. "You are still free," he said, "Hactenus liberi estis." But, if you advance one step farther, you shall be irrevocably fixed in a state of absolute continence; you shall be no longer free to return to the world. Reflect well on the step you are about to take: *Cogitate.* If you are firmly determined to keep your holy resolution, then approach in the name of the Lord: *Si in sancto proposito perseverare placet, in nomine Domini huc accedite!*

We accepted the condition; we took the step, and the doors of the sanctuary were opened to us. We pronounced the eternal, irrevocable yea. In the same instant we fell prostrate on the floor as victims which had received the death blow. We were dead to the desires of the flesh. We belonged no longer to the sensual

world. If we live still, our life must be hidden with Jesus Christ in God. (1 Coloss. III. 3.) What engagement can be more solemn, more binding? We made this engagement after mature reflection, in the house of God, before the altar of the Most High. We ratified it by touching the sacred vessels and the Holy Gospels. We sealed this solemn promise with the sacred Blood of Jesus Christ in holy Communion: what now remains for us but to fulfil all the conditions of this contract with heaven? "Vota mea Domino reddam." (Ps. cxv, 14.)

"Incorruption," says Holy Scripture, "bringeth near to God." (Wisd. vi, 20.) Virginity has received in woman, through Mary, an almost divine consecration; it receives in the priest a still more striking glorification. It is by virginity that the priest and the divine Lamb meet daily at the hour of sacrifice; that they walk along the same rivers of purifying grace; that they repose under the same roof; that they sit at the same table and are separated neither day nor night. Chastity is likewise the primary condition of our strength; and it is to this virtue that the priesthood owes its greatest conquests.

"Oh! how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory: for the memory thereof is immortal, because it is known both with God and with men. It triumpheth, crowned forever, winning the reward of undefiled conflicts." (Wisd. iv, 1, 2.)

Chastity raises us to a level with the angels: "Just as purity makes man equal to the angels, indeed makes him more than an angel," says Eusebius, "so does sensuality brutalize man, aye, degrade him even below the brute."

"If you persevere in unsullied chastity," says Sixtus III, "you shall be as an angel in the sight of God, and like a God in the sight of men."

Chastity raises us to the understanding of the highest mysteries: "Chastity," says St. Ambrose, "soars above the clouds, the skies, nay above the very angels, above the stars of heaven. The chaste soul finds the Eternal Word in the bosom of the Father and drinks in his sweetness with her whole heart."

"The faithful soul that preserves her chastity," says St. Basil, "is so far advanced that she forms in herself, as in a most clear mirror, a likeness of the God of all purity."

Chastity fills our soul with joy. "How sweet," says St. Augustine, "was it at once to me to be without the sweetness of those trifles! I dreaded to renounce the sweetness of those trifles, and now at once it was a great sweetness for me to give them up. Thou didst cast them forth from me, Thou true and highest Sweetness, and in place of them Thou didst thyself enter into my heart, sweeter than every pleasure." "Nothing so delights the faithful heart," says St. Cyprian, "as a conscience untarnished by any impure stain. To have overcome sensual pleasure is the highest pleasure; nor is there any victory greater than that which is won over the passions."

Chastity unites us to Jesus by a certain mysterious tie. "Although all the just are spouses of Christ," says St. Anthony of Padua, "yet virgins are his spouses in a far more special manner; for as husband and wife are one flesh, so are virgins one flesh with Christ, their Spouse."

"Jesus," says St. Fulgentius, "is the fruit born by holy virginity; he is its glory and its reward. Holy virginity brought Jesus into the world; he is the spouse of virgins. He alone made virginity fruitful; he crowns the virgins with a special glory in heaven.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Guardians of Sacerdotal Chastity.

In order to be able to say in truth with St. Paul, "In carne ambulantes, non secundum carnem militamus," (II Cor. x,) we must place our virtue of chastity under the guardianship of humility, vigilance and generosity.

The first rampart that we must erect to protect our weakness is humility. The cause of so many deplorable falls which bring dishonor on the sanctuary is nearly always pride. So many unmindful of their natural weakness, rashly expose themselves to danger. Ah! how easily do we fall into the abyss if we foolishly trust in our own strength! Chastity, says St. Francis de Sales, is a timid and delicate virtue; it is suspicious and trembling. One word is enough to make it fear; one look suffices to make it tremble. Beatus homo, qui semper est pavidus. (Prov. xxviii, 14.) No one is in greater danger of falling than he who will not believe that he is in danger. Not rank, nor age, nor virtue, can save those who are foolhardy. We are priests, but we have not ceased to be human beings. The sacred unction of Holy Orders has not extinguished the earthly fire that circulates in our veins. If we have any privilege over our fellow-men, it is that of being more frequently exposed to temptation. We often feel more drawn towards that which is forbidden.

We must therefore fear even the least danger. "Nec in præterita castitate confidas," says St. Jerome. We

are not holier than David, nor stronger than Samson, nor wiser than Solomon.

In one fatal moment a strong temptation may turn the heart of the priest, aye, even of the holiest priest into a hold of unclean spirits. Our natural weakness is so great, the devil is so cunning, the contagion is so widespread, the occasions are so numerous that, unless we are continually on our guard, we shall certainly fall. "Plurimi sanctissimi viri," says St. Jerome, "ceciderunt hoc vitio propter suam securitatem." "Crede mihi," says St. Augustine, "episcopus sum, veritatem loquor in Christo, non mentior: cedros libani et gregum arietes .... corruisse vidi, de quorum casu non magis præsumebam, quam Gregorii Nazianzeni aut Ambrosii.

Let no one be too confident, because of old age. Gray hairs are no protection in dangers of this kind. Look at those infamous judges who tempted the chaste Susanna. Were not their locks hoary with age? Was Solomon young when he suffered his heart to be depraved by woman? Quum esset senex, depravatum est cor ejus. (3 Reg. xi, 4.)

Happy is he who lives always in holy fear. In hac parte expedit plus bene timere, quam male fidere. (St. Cypr.) Self-confidence in this matter is often nothing else than presumption. God gives his grace to the humble; he resists the proud. "If virginity is the humility of the body," says St. Fulgentius, "then humility is, on the other hand, the virginity of the heart. Even in our necessary intercourse with the world, even in our most sacred functions, even in the most ordinary usages of society—everywhere, snares are set for the feet of the unwary. If you ask with St. Anthony: "Who can es-

cape so many dangers?" We answer: "Sola humilitas secure transire potest." "Do we wish to be chaste?" asks St. Ambrose; "Then let us be humble. Do we wish to be very chaste? Then let us be very humble."

The second guardian of sacerdotal chastity is *watchfulness*. Watchfulness is the companion of humble distrust in ourselves, and of the knowledge of the dangers to which we are exposed. A prudent man, who is obliged to travel over a road that is very slippery and surrounded with pitfalls, will not rush on at random. He examines carefully every foot of ground that he traverses. Now, we carry the treasure of chastity in frail vessels, and a relentless enemy makes every effort to rob us of this precious treasure. One unguarded moment may ruin us forever! Knowing that continence is the fruit of divine grace, the good priest prays without ceasing for this angelic virtue. And in order to make himself worthy of this grace, he not only prays, but he watches untiringly. Is it not remarkable that this command to watch is inculcated no less than five times in one chapter of St. Mark? (IX, 13, 23, 33, 35, 37.)

When we see the snare that has been laid for us, we are careful to shun it. If we watch over our hearts, if we notice the impressions made on us by external objects, we can easily prevent the temptation, or at least we can check its violence by repelling it promptly. We know that even the most violent passions have often but a slight beginning, and that it is easier to quench a spark than it is to extinguish a large fire.

The good priest watches continually. He watches especially over his imagination. An unbridled imagination can easily defile the soul.

The good priest watches over his heart in order to suppress every affection which is too natural, and every friendship which is too familiar.

Dangerous affections and friendships may be known by the following marks:

1. Long and unnecessary conversations.
2. Repeated visits, mutual praise and flattery.
3. The habit of excusing the faults of that dear friend.
4. Little jealousies, presents, etc.
5. Feeling of unhappiness and loneliness in the absence of that friend.

St. Jerome says: "That even pious persons, unless they keep themselves strictly within the bounds of duty, will fall by degrees."

"The strong hath stumbled against the strong and both have fallen." (Jer. xlvi, 12.)

The good priest watches over all his senses and especially over his eyes: Pepigi foedus cum oculis meis, ut ne cogitarem quidem de virgine. (Job. xxxi, 1.) Visum sequitur cogitatio, cogitationem delectatio, delectationem consensus. (St. Aug.)

We priests especially, who have to hear so many horrible sins in the confessional, often with the most disgusting circumstances—we who are bound to have patience and compassion, even with the vilest sinners—we are apt at last to become accustomed to sin—to lose that horror of sin that is our only safeguard.

> "Vice is a monster of so hideous mien
> That to be hated needs but to be seen,
> But seen too oft, familiar with her face,—
> We first endure, then pity—then embrace!"

We should, therefore, watch over our hearts and pray—pray fervently for a great horror of sin.

The good priest watches even over the zeal that animates him, lest after having begun in the spirit, he should end in the flesh. (Gal. iii, 3.)

The good priest observes scrupulously the virtue of temperance. "Ubi ebrietas, ibi certo certius luxuria est." (St. Ambrose.) Numquam ego ebrium castum putabo." (St. Jerome.) How many priests have been suspended on account of drink? How many are now wandering through the country as tramps on account of drink? How many have been brought to the hospital and the madhouse through drink? How many have renounced the priesthood altogether on account of women and drink? How many have apostatized, even turned preachers on account of women and drink? How many have met an untimely end on account of women and drink?

A priest in New England went on a sick call with the holy oils. He came to the house of a neighboring priest where he gambled and played till after midnight. In riding home drunk he fell from his horse and was found dead on the road, but the oil-stocks were missing. About a year after his successor was roused one night from his sleep by a loud knocking at the door. On hearing shouting. shrieks and cursing outside as if the house were surrounded by a troop of ruffians, he rushed down stairs. Suddenly the door was burst open and something was flung on the floor. The priest looked, but saw and heard nothing. All was silent as the grave. He struck a light. There on the floor were the oil-stocks sadly battered. The priest keeps them still in his drawer.

The good priest is guarded especially in his intercourse with those whose age and sex might endanger his virtue, or in any way tarnish his reputation.

"Fugiendæ imprimis cum mulieribus collocution es. . . . atque etiam ubi nos necessitas adegerit, ab ipsis non secus atque ab igne cavendum est, adeo ut quam ocissime, nullâ morâ, ab istis nos extricemus." (St. Basil.) The Holy Ghost himself says: "Behold not every one's beauty, and *tarry not among women.*" "For from a garment cometh the moth, and from a woman the iniquity of man." (Ecclesiast. xlii, 12, 13.) If you wish, therefore, to be secure, "Remove your way far from her." (Prov. v, 8.)

What is woman? S. Jerome answers: "She is the gate by which the devil enters, the road that leads to sin." In another place he says: "Woman is a fire, man the tow, and the devil the bellows." S. Maximus writes of woman: "She makes shipwreck of men, she is a tyrant who leads them captive, a lioness who holds them fast in her embrace, a syren decked out to lure them to destruction, a malicious evil beast." And S. Anastasius the Sinaite: "She is a viper clothed with a shining skin, a comfort to the demon, a laboratory of devils, a flaming furnace, a javelin wherewith the heart is pierced, a storm by which houses are overthrown, a guide leading to darkness, a teacher of all evil, an unbridled tongue speaking evil of the saints." St. Bonaventure writes: "A fair woman tricked out in her finery, is a keen and sharp-edged sword in the hands of the devil." And Cornelius à Lapide adds: "Her glance is that of the fabled basilisk, her voice is that of the syren. With her voice she enchants, with her beauty she deprives men of reason; voice and sight alike deal destruction and death." God grant that sad experience may never convince you of the truth of these words.

Let your conversations with women be few, short, and

grave. "From their society either smoke arises or flame." (*S. Ignatius.*) We have, as Père le Jeune says, three things to fear from intercourse with them: *lucrum cessans, damnum emergens, periculum sortis.*

When Jesus wished to console the widow of Naim, he said to her two words: "*Weep not.*" And so on other occasions, he seems to caution us against being diffuse in our discourse with those whom we have to console, or whom we reclaim from evil ways.

We must, therefore, avoid whatever may lead to familiarity, such, for instance, as "frequent presents of ornaments in dress, and of things tasty to the palate, letters teeming with affectionate phrases, tender looks, terms of endearment in conversation." (St. Jerome and St. Bonaventure.)

To this list might be added the practice of visiting ladies at their houses without a companion. "Our self-conceit is so great," says St. Cyprian, "that even the fall of others cannot convince us of our own weakness and of the danger to which we are continually exposed."

"There is always danger," says St. Chrysostom, "if we find pleasure in such company. Some indeed say that they do not feel any secret passion; but I do not believe that they are exempt from this weakness. We are often the greatest strangers to our own hearts. Indeed, I cannot help admiring these 'strong men,' who have 'nothing to fear' from such danger. I only wish that I were endowed with strength like theirs." (T. I, p. 231.) Can we carry fire in our bosom without being burnt?

Mulieres placere volunt, blandiri possunt, amari cupiunt. Let no one say: "This person is ugly; there is

no danger." The devil is a painter, says St. Cyprian. When the passions are roused, he knows how to transform the homeliest person into a paragon of beauty. A mother one day scolded her daughter for being in love with an ugly man. "O mother," answered she, "if you had my eyes, you would not think him so ugly."

Let no one say: "She is a relative of mine." This circumstance sometimes only increases the danger. Sin becomes only the more alluring, the more safely it is committed.

Many good priests keep their relatives in the house with them. This custom no one can blame. A good mother or sister in the house is often an excellent safeguard. The good priest should take care, however, that they are not domineering; that they are not tattlers or scandal-mongers, and especially that they do not give scandal. It is a sad fact that priests' nephews are sometimes the greatest scape-graces. If ever they make themselves a living newspaper, they will bring you daily half a dozen of reports which will cause much annoyance to you and may lead you to take many a false step.

The good priest observes what the Council of Carthage says: "Let no women reside in the priest's house without leave of the Bishop. Schoolmistresses and their pupil-teachers, as being more refined in intelligence and character, and therefore more exposed to the tongues of slanders, are altogether forbidden ever to reside in the priest's house with the clergy unless for some reasons known to the Bishop and approved by him in writing."

The good priest should also beware lest he become too affectionate and familiar towards some favorite niece or cousin, because she may easily become pitch and birdlime.

Let no one say: "This person is my penitent; she is a saint. There is no danger." No danger? O delusion! delusion! "Quo sanctiores sunt, eo magis aliciunt," says St. Thomas. "Ne sis familiaris alicui mulieri," says Thomas à Kempis, "sed omnes bonas mulieres Deo commenda. (Imit. Christi, lib. I, c, 8.) Alas! how many a good priest has been ruined by some pious devotee, in whom he placed too much confidence!

"Of all useless intercourse," says St. Vincent de Paul, "that with the confessor is the most dangerous. Good confessors see their spiritual children only in the confessional. As soon as familiarity begins to take root, the director loses grace and aptitude for guiding souls." Remember what St. Augustine says on this subject: "Spiritual love begets a tender love; a tender love begets obsequiousness, and obsequiousness begets familiarity, and familiarity begets carnal passion." "As good wine," says Balthasar, "easily turns into vinegar, so, in like manner, spiritual love is easily changed into carnal love."

"If we must be on our guard when associating with young persons of the other sex," says St. Francis de Sales, "we must be even more on our guard if these persons are at the same time virtuous. If we have even the least respect for ourselves we will not associate with persons of an immoral character; but we have but little or no fear of associating with those who are virtuous. Precisely this, however, is often the source of the greatest danger. Often our love of virtue is transferred insensibly to the virtuous person herself. And all the while we foolishly imagine that we love, not the person herself, but her virtues. At last the bond of affection becomes so strong that we have not the courage to break it."

"Carnal affection is dangerous for all," says St. Thomas Aquinas.

Once upon a time a light-headed daughter of Eve went to confession to her spiritual director. At first she could scarcely speak. She sighed heavily. She seemed to be in the greatest strait. The good priest spoke kindly, encouraged her to open her heart, to tell all her troubles. She then began to tell him how her guardian-angel had led her to such a good, kind confessor, how grateful she was for all his kindness—that she thought *so much of him* —she couldn't help it; she hoped he would forgive her—and, and—grant her absolution! Need I say where this happened, and how this innocent romance ended? How well has the poet said: "Anguis in herba."

St. Francis de Sales advised a great Prelate of the Church never to speak to one of the other sex unless some priest was present and charged to watch him closely; to have no correspondence with persons of the other sex except for the weightiest reasons, to be always short in his answers and to weigh well every word that he wrote to them.

Even Protestants and infidels, even the greatest sinners are shocked and scandalized by the least word, look, or action contrary to sacerdotal modesty. There is a natural instinct in the heart of every one, even the most degraded, which tells him that the priest should be chaste as the virgin snow.

"You have departed from the way; you have caused many to stumble at the law, you have made void the covenant, saith the Lord of Hosts. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people." Vos recessistis de via, et scandalizastis plurimos

in lege; irritum fecistis pactum, dicit Dominus exercituum; propter quod et ego dedi vos contemptibiles omnibus populis. (Mal. ii, 8, 9.)

Two things are absolutely necessary for us: a good conscience and a good reputation; a good conscience for the peace of our heart, a good reputation for the sake of our neighbor.

Mirabeau said of the French clergy: "We have confiscated their wealth; we could not rob them of their good name." If we wish to preserve this angelic virtue unsullied, we must fight with unflinching courage. We have to fight continually against our own passions. O how many times are we obliged to cut off our hand and pluck out our eye! (Matt. v, 29.) How often are we obliged to follow the advice given in the Imitation of Christ: "Subtrahere te violenter ab eo, ad quod natura vitiose inclinatur! (Lib. I, c. 25.)

The devil knows that he would meet with a poor reception were he to attack a priest openly; he, therefore, uses every artifice to ensnare him.

Some times he tries to make vice appear less deformed and less shameful than it really is. At other times he points out to the priest the great number of clergy whose lives are no better than his own.

At one time he tempts the priest to presumption, and at another time to despair. Some he emboldens and lulls to sleep by the secret suggestion that they have great virtues which hide their little weaknesses, and that, moreover, they are resolved not to go too far.

There are some who even make virtues of their very vices, who call their sinful attachments by the sacred name of *charity*. We imagine, says St. Augustine, that

whatever we love is good, and that whatever is pleasing is holy.

Again, how many priests have been ensnared by inordinate curiosity! Under the pretext of gaining information, they have been anxious to see everything, to hear everything, to read everything, to know everything, and soon they came to do everything also!

There are certain *ties* which a wise man does not simply untie or unknit; no, he breaks them off at once. There are moments in our life when we must be able to say with calm, unflinching determination: "Non possumus."

There are victories which can be gained only by flight: Apprehende fugam, si vis obtinere victoriam. (St. Aug. Serm. 250, de temp.) In order to preserve their chastity unsullied the saints suffered and sacrificed everything. Why did St. Augustine shed so many tears? Why did St. Jerome go through so many night-watches? Why did St. Hilarion keep so many severe fasts? Why did all the saints undergo so many macerations and mortifications? It was that they might preserve unstained the holy virtue of chastity. How many of them have even sacrificed their lives, in order to preserve this virtue, thus uniting the palm of martyrdom with the crown of virginity? The virtue of holy chastity is in itself a miracle of fortitude—a strength which seems to surpass even the fortitude of martyrs. The combat of the martyrs is fierce indeed, but it is not lasting; but the combat of the virgins ends only with their last breath.

Glorificate et portate Deum in corpore vestro. (1 Cor. vi, 20.) Let us glorify and bear God in our body. Let us offer this body to God as a living, holy and pleasing

victim. Let us unite the sacrifice of our body with that of the adorable victim which we daily offer on the altar. Obsecro vos, ut exhibeatis corpora vestra hostiam viventem, sanctam, Deo placentem. (Rom. xii, 1.); semper mortificationem Jesu in corpore nostro circumferentes. (2 Cor. iv, 10.) Where shall we find this mortification of Christ, if not in those who nourish themselves daily with the flesh of Christ? Let us pray that God may forever preserve and increase in us this angelic virtue: "Ure igne Sancti Spiritus renos nostros et cor nostrum, Domine, ut tibi casto corpore serviamus et mundo corde placeamus." Let us pray especially to the Virgin of virgins, that she may obtain for us that glorious crown which is reserved for the virgins in heaven.

A servant of God once saw in purgatory many who were suffering for having committed sins against the virtue of holy purity; but she did not find one priest among them. On asking the reason of this, the angel told her that scarcely one impure priest ever does sincere penance for his sins, and that consequently such unworthy priests are lost.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Priest must be a Man of Science.

"Attende tibi et doctrinæ," says St. Paul, that is, sanctify yourself and study diligently the doctrines of your holy faith; you will thereby save your own soul and the souls of those who listen to you. (I Tim. iv, 16.) The first, the most important duty of the priest is to be pious and virtuous. "*Attende tibi*;" but he is bound also to be a man of learning. "Attende tibi *et doctrinæ*." A layman may save his soul without much learning, but an ignorant priest is in the greatest danger of being lost eternally. The priest must be a man of learning. The law of God, the holy Church, his sublime vocation, his position in society, all require it.

The Law of God requires that the priest should have learning, not only that he may labor profitably, but even that he may save his soul.

All the studies of the young seminarian before his ordination, can only prepare him for the important studies to which he must devote himself during the rest of his life. In college, in the seminary, before ordination, he learns merely the fountains from which he must draw the science required by his holy vocation.

A priest without learning is like a soldier without arms; he is entirely at the mercy of the enemy.

You will find some who try to excuse their sloth and ignorance by quoting the words of St. Paul: "Scientia inflat." (I Cor. viii, 1.) Non plus sapere quam opertet sapere, sed sapere ad sobrietatem. (Rom. xii, 3.)

But certainly St. Paul does not mean to encourage sloth or ignorance. He wishes only to warn us against unprofitable studies. St. Paul was himself a man of learning. "Secus pedes Gamaliel," as he says of himself, "eruditus juxta veritatem paternæ legis." (Act, xxii, 3.) "Attende lectioni, exhortationi et doctrinæ," is the advice he gives to his disciple (St. Timothy iv, 13.) He says that the minister of the Gospel should be, "Potens exhortari in doctrina sana et eos qui contradicunt arguere." (Tit. i, 9.)

The very titles given to the priest in holy Writ prove, beyond doubt, that he must be a man of learning. There he is called the interpreter of God's will, the depositary of science, the light of the world, the teacher, the guide, the visible angel chosen to lead in the path of truth and virtue those immortal souls whom God has created in his own image and whom he has redeemed by his precious blood.

Even in the Old Testament God commands his chosen people to recur to the priest in all their doubts and difficulties.

"Si difficile et ambiguum apud te judicium perspexeris, venies ad sacerdotes qui indicabunt judicii veritatem." (Deut. xvii, 8.) Labia sacerdotis custodient scientiam, et legem requirent ex ore ejus, quia angelus Domini exercituum est." (Mal. ii, 6.)

Now, if the priests of the Old Testament were the depositaries of wisdom, the interpreters of God's mysteries, how much more must this be true of the priests of the New Law, who have mysteries far more sublime to explain, and offices far more sacred to fulfil; who are sent not merely to one nation, like the prophets of old, but

who have to enlighten the whole world. "Vos estis lux mundi," says our Lord, "vos civitas supra montem posita." If even in the Old Law those who neglected to acquire the necessary science were excluded from the priesthood—"Quia tu scientiam repulisti," says God by the mouth of his prophet, "repellam te, ne sacerdotio fungaris mihi," (Osee, iv, 6), how much more will not God reject and condemn, in the New Law, those who are ignorant, who neglect to study. The priests of the New Law are the pastores et doctores electi ad consummationem sanctorum in opus ministerii, in ædificationem corporis Christi." (Eph. iv, 12.) They have to explain the mysteries of faith, they have to enlighten those who are in doubt, they have to confute heretics and unbelievers, and therefore they must be well educated. "Si quis ignorat," says St. Paul, "ignorabitur." (I Cor. xiv, 18.)

The Church, enlightened by the Holy Ghost, has always required learning in her priests. "Nullus ad sacra veniat indoctus," says the Council of Toledo. (8) "Illiteratus nullus præsumat ad clericatus ordinem pro moveri, says Pope Gelasius (Dist. 51, c. 1.)

The Fathers of the Church, too, insist, in the strongest terms, on the necessity of the priest being a man of learning. "Si in laicis vix tolerabilis est inscientia," says St. Leo the Great, "in eis qui præsunt, id est, sacerdotibus, nec excusatione digna est, nec venia." (Epist. 22, ad Const.) St. Jerome says that a priest who has piety without learning, does as much harm to the Church as one who has learning without piety." (In Epist. ad Tit. et Tim.) He even goes so far as to say that an ignorant priest is no priest at all. "Si sacerdos est, sciat

legem Domini; si ignorat legem, ipse se arguit, non esse Domini sacerdotem." (In Ag. c. 2.) Every priest should be able to say to the people with St. Augustine: "Codices vestri sumus."

St. Teresa says of spiritual directors that a learned priest, even though he may not be so pious, is a safer director than one who has piety without learning.

The *Very Position of the Priest in Society* requires that he should be a man of learning. People of the world—not only Catholics, but even Protestants and infidels look upon the priest as a man of education. During the war a certain infidel officer gave the use of his tent for hearing confessions. "I give it with pleasure to a priest," he said. "Priests are gentlemen of refinement and education." If even lawyers and doctors are required to be gentlemen of refinement and education, how much more is not this required of the priest. He should, in fact, be a man of universal knowledge, as he is consulted by all classes and upon almost every subject. Especially in this country where the priest travels so much, is thrown so much in the society of Protestants and infidels, is called upon, on so many occasions, to deliver a speech or a lecture, to defend Catholic doctrines against some unscrupulous maligner, the priest, I repeat, must be a man of deep and universal knowledge.

The priest must be a theologian so as to teach without uttering heresies. He must be a philologist to be able to understand the true meaning of so many difficult texts and idioms in Holy Writ, especially in the psalms and hymns which he has to recite every day.

He must be a *jurist* in order to decide correctly in every case that comes before him, in and out of the con-

fessional, such as marriage cases, law cases, disputes, questions of justice.

He must be a *physician.* Very often he must have the knowledge of a physician, though, of course, he cannot practise as one.

No class of men is more frequently and more intimately brought into connection with sickness than Catholic priests; the medical profession not excepted. Who is generally the first that is consulted in cases of serious illness? It is the priest. Is not his counsel the most cherished? Is not his voice the most potent? Is it not in his hands that the guidance of affairs is often left? Is it not the priest who often decides whether or not a physician is to be sent for and who should be selected. It is, therefore, no exaggeration to say that, apart altogether from his sacred ministrations, the priest's relation to the sick is one of the utmost importance. How many a life, lost through ignorance, might be saved by the exercise of a little skill and promptitude. It is therefore well, both for his own sake and for that of the sick with whom he is brought in contact, that he should understand something at least of the nature of disease—how it may be prevented, or how its danger may be diminished, and its fatality averted.

You may perhaps object the well-known words of the poet: "A little learning is a dangerous thing;" but, assuredly, even a little learning is better than none; and men should not be kept in ignorance of that which they ought to know and have a right to know.

The priest should be able to judge at least when there is danger of death, so as to give the last sacraments in due time. Physicians, too, sometimes ask his advice.

The priest should be a book-keeper ; he must be able to keep all his accounts clear and legible, so that when removed by death or otherwise, his removal will cause neither trouble nor scandal.

The priest must be a good *financier* so as to steer clear of debts or to be able to pay off the debts which his predecessors may have incurred.

The priest should be a good musician. At least he should know how to procure sweet and soul-inspiring music ; how to avoid lascivious music on the one hand, and ear-splitting, drawling, monotonous, note-murdering music on the other.

The priest should also be a *man of refined taste.* He should know how to decorate his church, so that it is not cold and cheerless like a Presbyterian barn, or glaring with vulgar, gaudy colors like a barber-shop or beer-saloon.

The priest must also be an architect and builder. He should know something of the laws of acoustics. He has often to build churches, and he should know how to make them beautiful, devout and practical.

The priest is like a public fountain to which every one comes, and from which each one expects to draw as much as he needs. What a disappointment for all if the fountain

> "Seems deep as the sky in a lake
> Till the mire at six inches reveals the mistake."

What a disgrace for the Church, what a burning shame for the poor people, if the priest is ignorant, if some brazen infidel or loud-mouthed preacher can put him to silence !

There is nothing of which the people feel so proud as

when they have a priest who is not only virtuous, but also courageous, a man of great talents, able to silence the lying preacher and the scoffing infidel. The good people fairly worship such a priest; they feel like carrying him on their shoulders. Such a priest succeeds not only in making many converts, but even in bringing back to the faith those who had strayed away through human respect, or even through the scandalous conduct of some unworthy priest.

The sublime vocation of the priest requires that he should be a man of learning.

What would you think of a man who would assume the responsibility of a pilot in one of our rivers without having sufficient knowledge of either the river or the business? What would you think of an engineer on a railroad or steamer, who is ignorant of the nicely adjusted and powerful machinery placed under his control? What fool-hardiness would not he be guilty of who, without having studied the human system, should attempt to perform a critical surgical operation? How irrational would not he appear who should undertake to teach the higher branches of science without having first studied and mastered them himself? How much more fool-hardy and criminal is he who dares take upon himself the sublime duties, the awful responsibilities of the priesthood without having first prepared himself by long, careful and thorough study?

He who enters the holy state of the priesthood uneducated and unprepared sins against God, against his fellow-men and against himself.

Even the natural law obliges every one to fit himself for that state or office to which God has called him.

Suppose a doctor should give up study as soon as he receives his diploma, he would certainly do but little good and much harm to those who should have the misfortune to employ him. How much more harm can a priest do who neglects to study after he is ordained? An ignorant doctor can usually do only temporal harm, while an ignorant priest can do harm, the consequences of which are eternal.

N. N. who married a woman to a second husband, said he had obtained a dispensation, when a dispensation could not be given even by the Pope.

A certain woman wished to marry a widower after having stood for his child. The priest said, there was no impediment. She reminded him of the impediment and showed it to him in the mission-book. "O," answered he, "those missionary priests are too strict."

The priest must have learning to be able to preach with fruit.

To preach means to teach in public, to teach the way of salvation to those immortal souls for whom Jesus shed his blood. In this country especially the priest must preach not only in presence of friends and admirers, in presence of good simple Catholics, he must also preach in presence of enemies, of critics, of heretics and of unbelievers. His words, wise or otherwise, are sometimes even reported in the papers, and thus scattered broadcast over the country.

St. Charles Barromeo requires that the priest before he begins to preach should be master of all ecclesiastical sciences. He should be well acquainted with the apostolic and ecclesiastical traditions and with the writings of the Fathers. He should be well versed in exegesis

and in liturgy, in Church history and canon law. He should also know the maxims and principles of the spiritual life. He should, moreover, know how to speak with eloquence, how to rivet the attention of his hearers, how to convince, and how to persuade them. He must know also how to make his sermons practical, how to adapt them to the wants of the various classes before him. (Act. Med. p. 536 ch.)

The priest has to announce not mere human opinions, but divine, eternal truths. He must therefore know these truths thoroughly, he must be a good theologian.

"To preach well," says St. Alphonsus, "we must study diligently, we must be well prepared. He who enters the pulpit without preparation, who talks at random, just what comes into his head—will do more harm than good."

The priest, for instance, must know not only the laws of the Church, but also the causes which dispense from the observance of these laws. Otherwise, if he be too lax or too rigorous, he may sometimes burden his own conscience as well as the conscience of the people even with grievous sins.

The priest must be able to *convince* his hearers of the truth of what he preaches. He therefore must be convinced himself, he must speak from his heart, he must be thoroughly imbued with his subject. But how can the priest do this unless he is thoroughly acquainted with the subject, unless he studies diligently?

A sermon is not a mere dry, logical, scientific lecture. The priest must come down to the capacity of his hearers; he must sometimes, after the example of our Lord

and his saints, make use of parables; illustrations from nature and authenic examples from history, haziology, etc. Verba movent, exempla trabunt.

The priest, therefore, must be like the good "pater familias qui profert de thesauro suo nova et vetera." He should be fond of study; he should endeavor to be prepared for every emergency. He is so often called upon to speak in public; sometimes without a moment's warning. Even the most simple and ignorant people can easily tell when the priest preaches without preparation. His ideas are playing leap-frog. There is neither head nor tail in what he says. He seems always seeking for the end of his sermon and always unable to find it. He evidently belongs to that class whom St. Paul describes as "Non intelligentes neque quæ loquuntur, neque de quibus affirmant." (I Tim. i, 7.)

The sermons of such a priest superabound in unmeaning platitudes and wearisome repetitions.

You will find many who have a great flow of language, a natural facility for speaking. But this very facility is often for many a great danger. Such persons are apt to neglect study, to preach without preparation, and consequently their sermons become, at last, shallow and insipid.

There are some who excuse themselves by saying that they have to preach only to good simple country people, consequently they need not study so much or prepare themselves so carefully. This is a great mistake. The poor simple people are especially dear to God. "Pauperes evangelizantur." They have often a more simple, earnest faith than the great and learned. A good father when his children ask for bread, will certainly not give them a stone.

"The body of the Church," says St. Chrysostom, "is subject to more serious diseases and attacks than our body of the flesh, and is more slowly healed.

"To cure the diseases of human bodies, medical men have invented various medicines and instruments, proper diet, change of climate, and so on. But no such remedies can cure the diseases of the body of the Church. There is but one method of cure—great ability of giving solid instruction: this is the instrument, this is the diet, this is the most genial climate: this stands for physic, cautery, and for the knife. If there must be cautery and incision, one must perforce use this. If this is useless, everything else is of no avail. It is by verbal instruction that we arouse the slothful, encourage the faint-hearted, convert sinners, convince heretics of their errors, and make the truths of salvation known everywhere.

"A bodily disease may be easily cured; but if the intellect is wrong, if the mind is filled with false principles and doctrines, the cure of such a disease of the soul is very difficult. If, however, any one should have so great a faith as to work miracles, and by miracles be able to stop the mouth of the shameless, he might not stand so much in need of the help of human reasoning; but even then it is very useful to know how to speak well.

"St. Paul had the gift of miracles for which he was admired everywhere, and yet he employed the art of oratory. And St. Peter reminds us of the influence of this art when he says: "Be ready to give an answer to every man who asks you a reason of the hope that is in you." (I Pet. iii, 15.) And the Apostles together entrusted the care of the widows to deacons for no other reason than that they themselves might have more time for the ministry of the word of God. (Acts, vi, 4.)

"Nevertheless, we might not stand so much in need of the art of human oratory, if we had the gift of miracles; but if we have not this gift, and many enemies constantly assail us on every side, we must be well versed in this human art of oratory, in order that we may not be smitten by the arrows of our enemies, but that we rather may smite them.

"But here one might say, Why then was St. Paul not anxious to excel in the power of speech? He is not ashamed of being destitute of this gift, but openly avows his poverty of speech to the Corinthians, who were admired for their eloquence and highly boasted of it. (2 Cor. xi, 6.)

"It is this very thing which has rendered many careless about acquiring the art of oratory. Not being able to explore the depth of the minds of the Apostles, and to understand the purport of their words, they have passed their time in idleness.

"Suppose St. Paul was not versed in the art of human speech, can this be an excuse for any priest of our time to neglect this art? St. Paul had a power far greater than that of speech—one which could accomplish far greater things. Wherever he appeared, even in silence, he was terrible to demons. How many priests of our day would it take to perform, by their prayers and tears, what the aprons of St. Paul effected? (Acts, xix, 12.) By his prayer, St. Paul raised the dead to life, and wrought other most astounding miracles, so that strangers took him for a god. (Acts, xiv, 11.) And during his life he was counted worthy to be caught up to the third heaven and hear words which it is not lawful for a human being to hear. (2 Cor. xii, 2.) What priest then does not shrink from comparing himself with such an Apostle?

"But St. Paul is still more illustrious by his angelic life than by his miracles. Who can adequately describe his zeal for the salvation of souls, his meekness, his constant perils, his thronging cares, his incessant griefs for the Churches, his compassion for the rich, his many tribulations, his daily deaths? (2 Cor. xi, 23–29.) What place in the world, what continent, what sea did not witness the conflicts of this great Apostle? Even the uninhabited land knew him and often received him when in danger. He endured every kind of assault and attained every kind of victory. He never ceased either to struggle or to triumph. And after so many good deeds, after innumerable laurels, he desired to be delivered to eternal punishment, in order that the Jews who had often stoned him and had slain him as far as they could, might be saved and come to Christ. (Rom. ix, 3.) Who had such an affection for Christ, if this can be called affection, and not rather something else, more than affection? Shall we then still compare ourselves with him who was endowed with so extraordinary graces from above, and who displayed so heroic virtues in private. What can be more presumptuous than this?

"But, after all, St. Paul was not unskilful in the art of human speech, as some think. We call not only him unskilled who is not versed in the art of oratory, but also him who knows not how to defend the doctrines of faith. Now, St. Paul did not say that he was unskilled in both, but only in one, and in saying this, he made a nice distinction by saying that he was unskilled in speech, but not in knowledge. Therefore, let a man be unskilled in oratory, but let him not be unskilled in knowledge and accuracy of doctrine.

"But is it true that St. Paul was unskilful in the art of oratory? See how he confounded the Jews who dwelt at Damascus when he had not yet wrought any miracles! (Acts, ix, 22.) How he overcame the Greeks. Why was he sent to Tarsus? (Acts, ix, 30.) Was it not because he mightily prevailed by his word, and pressed so hard upon them that, not being able to endure their defeat, they were so much provoked that they determined to kill him. He conquered not by miracles, but by the power of his speech.

"See, again, how St. Paul did contend and dispute with those who endeavored to Judaize in Antioch. (Acts, xv, 1–35.) Did not the Areopagite who was of that most superstitious city, with his wife, follow him, because of his powerful speech? (Acts, xvii, 34.) And how came Eutychus to fall from the window? Was it not because St. Paul protracted his discourse to the dead of night? (Acts, xx, 9.)

"And what occurred at Thessalonica and Corinth? What at Ephesus, and in Rome itself? Did he not spend whole days and nights in succession in expounding the Holy Scriptures? And who does not know his disputes with the Epicureans and Stoics? (Acts, xvii, 18.) Since then, this great apostle made use of his eloquence both before his miracles and along with them, how will any one dare to call unskilled him who was admired by all for the power of his speech? For this very reason the Lycaonians supposed him to be Mercury.

"Wherein had St. Paul the prerogative over the other Apostles? And why throughout the whole world is he so much in the mouths of all? Is it not because of the excellence of his epistles? Like some noble chieftain he

stands even now among us by his writings, leading captive every thought unto the obedience of Christ and casting down reasonings and every high thing which is exalted against the knowledge of God. (2 Cor. x, 5.) Now all this he does by those admirable epistles of his so full of divine wisdom.

"And in these epistles he not only gives us arguments for the overthrow of false doctrines and for the defence of the genuine, but in them he also encourages us to lead holy lives. From these epistles bishops and priests take the arguments in favor of the life of virginity.

"Now, St. Paul wishes us to excel in like manner in the art of speech. 'Attend,' he writes to Timothy, 'to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine;' and he mentions the advantage of this by saying: 'For by doing this, thou wilt save both thyself and those that hear thee.' (1 Tim. iv, 13, 16.) 'Continue thou in those things which thou hast learned, and which have been committed to thee, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and because from thy infancy thou hast known the Holy Scriptures which can instruct thee to salvation, by the faith that is in Christ Jesus.' (2 Tim. iii, 14, 15.) 'The servant of the Lord must not wrangle, but be mild towards all men, *apt to teach*, patient, with modesty admonishing them that resist the truth.' (2 Tim. ii, 24.) And 'a bishop must be able to exhort in sound doctrine, and to convince the gainsayers.' (Tit. i, 9.)

"Now, how will any one unskilful in the art of speech be able to convince and silence gainsayers? What need is there to attend to reading and the Scriptures, if this unskilfulness is to be welcomed? Such a pretext is but an excuse for sloth and a cloak for idleness.

"How many have fallen away from the faith because their priests were not able to explain and defend sound doctrine against the attacks of heretics. And even if we suppose that there are many who do not fall away from the faith for want of sound instruction, yet it cannot be denied that by degrees they become wavering in their religion, and easily suffer shipwreck in it. Unhappy and cruel pastor, for want of learning, you are the cause of the ruin of so many souls!" (De Sacerd.)

The priest must also teach *Catechism.* "Parvuli petierunt panem, et non erat qui fraugeret eis," (Thren. iv, 4,) is the bitter complaint of the prophet. How many parishes there are where the people have not, perhaps cannot have a Catholic school. Now how are the children of such a parish instructed? How much of the Catechism do they really understand? Even when the people have a good Catholic school, and the children learn by heart every word of the Catechism, how difficult it is to make them understand clearly the correct meaning of so many abstract words. The priest himself must have very clear ideas; he must know how to make these ideas clear to others, especially to children. He must know how to interest the little ones, how to gain and rivet their attention. He must, therefore, have an inexhaustible store of beautiful examples, parables, illustrations from nature and so on.

Now to be able to do all this, a priest must think, must read, must study and study continually.

The priest, is, moreover, a *confessor.* This office especially requires deep and universal knowledge.

While preaching, and teaching Catechism, there is not much danger that any one will puzzle the priest with

deep and difficult questions. He can, moreover, prepare himself for what he intends to say. But in the confessional he must be prepared for everything. The most serious, the most difficult questions are brought before him; he has to explain, he has to direct, he has to decide in the most difficult matters.

In the confessional the priest has to give instructions adapted to the wants, the dispositions and the capabilities of the person before him. He has to speak of the most sacred, the most delicate, the most dangerous subjects. He may, for instance, have to speak of the laws and duties and sins of the married life. He has to be so careful to use the chastest language and teach neither too much nor too little, especially never to teach what the penitent should not know.

In the confessional the priest is, moreover, called upon to guide souls in the spiritual life, to lead them in the path of perfection. How can an ignorant priest do all this?

Very often, too, the advice has to be given immediately, as the penitent cannot return. It may be a difficult, serious question—as for instance a question of justice or restitution. The most learned theologians are sometimes puzzled. How can the ignorant confessor give correct advice when he has not learned even to doubt?

In the confessional the priest is also a *judge* and a *physician*. The soul of the penitent is mortally wounded; the confessor must heal it, the penitent has perhaps fallen for the first time, or he is perchance the slave of some sinful habit, and yet he does not realize his degradation. He is perhaps living in the immediate occasion of sin and does not wish to give it up. He has perhaps

been, for years, falling again and again into the same sin without using the necessary means to avoid it. The ignorant confessor, however, treats all sinners alike, or he acts, not according to principles, but according to his whim. If he is in good humor, or happens to like the penitent, he gives absolution at once, no matter whether the penitent is disposed or not. Should the ignorant confessor, however, be in bad humor,—woe to the poor penitent. Whether disposed or not he is sent off, even without a hearing! In either case the penitent goes away hardened. He is worse than when he entered the confessional. Alas! what harm an ignorant priest can do, who acts, not according to principles, but according to his feelings! He turns the fountain of mercy into a fountain of gall and poison!

"Ars artium regimen animarum," says the learned and holy Pope Gregory; and yet you find so many who boldly undertake this awful, this difficult task with so little knowledge and preparation! How true are the words of the poet:

"Fools step in where angels fear to tread."

It is the common opinion of theologians that a priest is guilty of mortal sin, if he undertakes the office of confessor without the necessary knowledge.

It is evident, then, that the priest must be not only a pious man, but also a man of learning. In fact, if the priest is truly pious, he will at least strive earnestly to acquire all that a priest is bound to know.

What then is a priest bound to know and study especially? He must study especially those things that he needs most, to wit: Theology, dogmatic and moral, Holy Scripture, the principles and maxims of the spiritual

life, especially if he has the guidance of religious, whether teachers in his school or cloistered nuns. He must also study Church history, liturgy and canon law, at least as far as it is needed in this country. Necessary studies must always be preferred to those that are merely useful; and useful studies to those that are merely interesting or ornamental. He who should neglect necessary studies for some favorite branch of science, would certainly be greatly to blame.

The priest, therefore, must study, and study continually; it is not age nor experience, nor the learning we may have acquired, that can excuse us from the obligation of continual study.

The love of study has another great advantage which we must not overlook,—it keeps us from idleness and from many a sin. "Multam malitiam docuit otiositas," says Holy Writ. (Ecclus. xxxiii, 29.) How many a great and holy man has been brought to ruin through idleness! "In occupationibus sancti, in otio perierunt," says St. Augustine.

You will find that nearly all those priests who give scandal, who bring disgrace upon the holy priesthood, are precisely the very ones who neglect study, who have no love for study. On the contrary, you will seldom or never find a priest giving scandal, who is pious and fond of study.

You may indeed sometimes find a pious and learned priest who does not display as much zeal as he ought; he may even sometimes neglect his parish; but you will hardly ever find such a one giving scandal. "Ama scripturas," says St. Jerome, "et carnis vitia non amabis." The priest who is pious and learned sanctifies himself and others.

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TESTIMONIALS.

What is thought and said of these Books and Catechisms.

I. *What is thought and said of these Books.*

ST. PAUL, 12 Dec., 1881.

Rev. M. Muller, C.SS.R., St. Louis, Mo.

REV. DEAR FATHER MULLER.—I received the book you were so kind to send me, "The Greatest and the First Commandment." I am reading it. What I have already said of the other books of the series I repeat now with *greater emphasis of this one and of all.* The science of theology, or the philosophy of religion, has been sealed except to the clergy and the highly educated among laymen. Few of the latter, however, care to go through the drudgery of study in a language foreign to them and with forms and a terminology requiring long practice to make familiar. Yet the greatest need of the Church in the present day is to have Catholics thoroughly instructed in the principles of their religion and the reasons for their faith. I conceive this to be your motive in writing these books—to supply the means by which this most needed knowledge may be placed within the reach of every earnest Catholic. It is this that constitutes the super-eminent excellence of these books. But not only do they instruct with utmost thoroughness and precision, they are deeply edifying; and, what is of greater consideration, they are pleasing and attractive by their style and manner. They deserve to be entitled—*Catholic Theology popularized.* I mean no mere commendation in writing this. These books, to be available for their real value, must be known to our Catholic people, which I regret to say is not the case except to a very limited extent; when known they will amply commend themselves.

Thanking you, dear Father, for the instruction, the edification, the refreshment of soul I have derived from your books, I am with sincerest regards,

Yours faithfully in Christ,

✠ Thomas L. Grace,
Bishop St. Paul.

AUSTIN, TEXAS, Jan'y 22d, 1883.

REV. DEAR FATHER.—I have read with much attention and deep interest your work "God the Teacher of Mankind." I assure you I highly appreciate it, and beg most cordially to congratulate you on the great services you have rendered to the interests of Catholic truth and enlightenment by the execution of the task you have imposed on yourself. We owe you much for a work so useful and instructive, both to the clergy and laity. Your style is very plain and attractive, even when you explain what is most difficult to understand in Catholic theology. In my humble opinion, this work meets the needs of our age and country ; for it not only instructs the reader in the true religion in an interesting manner, but leads him also imperceptibly to solid piety and devotion. I ardently desire to see this work in every Catholic family. May the Holy Ghost continue to direct your pen.

Believe me your devoted confrere in Christ,

P. Lauth, C.S.C.

TROY, March 29th, 1884.

REV. DEAR FATHER.—I received your work, "The Greatest and the First Commandment." I prize it highly; would have it even if it cost $10.

Rev. J. W. Dolan.

REFUGIO, TEXAS, Dec. 15, 1883.

REV. DEAR FATHER.—Your works well deserve the high praises bestowed upon them. Even our cow-boys and the stock-raising people of the South-Western Texas are deeply interested in your books.

Rev. E. A. Antoine.

MANHATTAN, KANSAS, May 14th, 1884.

VERY REV. M. MULLER.—I confess, reverend dear sir, to a feeling of self-complacency in addressing you ; yet prompted by a sense of gratitude.

Trained as I was by most pious parents among exemplary brothers and sisters ; educated at a Catholic College : then spending some forty years of married life conscientiously attending religious services and hearing instructive sermons on Sundays and Festivals: I flattered myself that my religious education was complete ! Then, how comes it that "God the Teacher of Mankind" should open to

my soul such new and solemn impressions? Pious thoughts, fervent resolutions, arise impulsively; and I fondly trust that your admirable lessons may produce an ardent change of heart in my ripened years, since I find much yet to learn, at least in practice.

Very sincerely yours,

Basil T. Elder.

PEABODY, Dec. 5th, 1883.

REV. FATHER.—Some years ago I purchased a copy of your edifying and instructive work, "The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass," which I read with great delight and satisfaction. Since then I have added other volumes of your works to my library, and they are more read by members of the family than any other books. Truly has it been said that your works form by themselves a complete Catholic library. They contain a vast amount of useful information couched in language eloquent and concise. I am a member of the Peabody Institute Library and Lyceum Committee, and intend to have your works placed in the library for general circulation, so that all good Catholics, who cannot buy them, will thus be enabled to read them and profit by their instruction.

Yours respectfully,

Frank Nugent.

II. *What is thought and said of the Catechisms.*

MILWAUKEE, February 8, 1876.

Reverend and Dear Sir:

I have received the Catechisms, your noble work. They truly deserve every recommendation. I hereby cheerfully permit you to use my name for the approbation of your excellent Catechisms. Believe me, dear Father,

Yours, truly devoted,

✠ JOHN M. HENNI,
Archbishop of Milwaukee.

PHILADELPHIA, July 31, 1876.

Rev. Dear Father:

The Most Rev. Archbishop Wood has read, with much pleasure, the Catechisms sent by your paternity, for his inspection.

The Archbishop willingly adds his approbation to that of the eminent prelates who have already given in theirs.

Very respectfully yours in Christ,

AUG. J. McCONOMY,
Secretary.

CHICAGO, ILL., February 4, 1876.

Rev. Dear Sir:

The compilation of a Catechism is a very difficult undertaking, and yet I think you have succeeded remarkably well. I have looked over No. 1 and No. 2, and have been much pleased with them. I prefer them, by far, to the Catechisms which have been heretofore in use among us. There is a clear connection of the different parts, and a completeness, and yet a simplicity in the answers, which are a vast improvement. I shall take pleasure in recommending their use in the schools throughout my diocese.

I remain, very sincerely,

✠ JOHN J. KAIN,
Bishop of Wheeling.

WILMINGTON, DEL., February 6, 1876.

Dear Father Muller:

I have looked over your Catechisms, Nos. 1 and 2, of the revised edition, and found them suitable for our times, especially to give our young folks (as well as seekers after truth) a very concise, yet

comprehensive, view of Catholic doctrine. We need some generally approved catechism in English. Yours will materially aid in that direction.

I am yours in Christ,

✠ THOMAS A. BECKER,
Bishop, Wilmington, Del.

GALVESTON, February 27, 1876.

Reverend and dear Father:

I not only approve of the Catechisms which you send me for examination, but I also warmly recommend them to everybody. All those who have seen them are very much pleased, and I hope they will do much good, for, all throughout their pages, can be noticed the aim of the author, which is to make the reader a good, practical Catholic.

Yours respectfully,

✠ C. M. DUBUIS,
Bishop of Galveston.

RICHMOND, VA., March 4, 1876.

Dear Father Muller:

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your improved edition of your Catechisms. I was glad to notice that, in this second edition, you had made a few desirable alterations on the subjects of the Church and the Holy Communion.

There are few works more laborious, or which require more patient industry, more correct knowledge of theology, and a nicer distinction of phraseology, than the compilation of a Catechism of Christian Doctrine.

The Imprimatur of the Most Rev. Archbishop of Baltimore, and the approbation of other prelates, are good evidences of the success of your undertaking. As far as I have examined the Catechisms, I am pleased with them, and take pleasure in recommending them.

Faithfully, yours in Christ,

✠ JAMES GIBBONS,
Bishop of Richmond.

ST. PAUL, March 8, 1876.

Reverend Dear Sir:

Your series of Catechisms I examined, and was greatly pleased with them, and recommended them on several occasions. You may

certainly use my name, as in high approval of your series of Catechisms.

I am, respectfully yours,

✠ THOMAS L. GRACE,

Bishop of St. Paul.

MARYSVILLE, March 8, 1876.

Rev. Dear Father:

I hail the appearance of the second edition of your Catechisms of Christian Doctrine, for Parochial and Sunday-Schools. It appears to me a great improvement on your first Catechisms, and highly deserving the approbation which His Grace, the Most Rev. Archbishop of Baltimore, has given it. The various Catechisms in use throughout the United States may be compared to the Latin versions of the Scripture in St. Jerome's time. And although St. Augustine approved of St. Jerome's version, or revision, he and many others adhered, for a long time, to the old Latin. But, ultimately, St. Jerome's revision won its way, and, some centuries after its author's death, drove its elder rivals out of the field, and became the one recognized version throughout the Church. So may it fare with your admirable Catechisms! I regret that they had not appeared when the second Plenary Council of Baltimore was in session. But, in course of time, I have no doubt regarding the due appreciation of your Catechisms.

I remain your obliged servant in Christ,

✠ E. O'CONNELL,

Bishop of Marysville, Cal.

SAVANNAH, March 30, 1876.

Rev. Dear Father Muller:

I have received your Catechisms, Nos. 1 and 2. They are written in a style which, I think, will be easily understood by the children, and the method which obtains in your Catechisms will cause the little ones to retain more easily the sacred truth taught in them. I have most cheerfully recommended them in my diocese.

Yours, in Christ,

✠ WILLIAM GROSS, C.SS.R.,

Bishop of Savannah.

GREEN BAY, April 15, 1876.

Rev. Dear Father:

I have read your Catechisms. The questions and answers are very plain, clear, and concise. I add my recommendation to that of many distinguished prelates.

✠ F. X. KRAUTBAUER,
Bishop of Green Bay.

CHICAGO, July 14, 1876.

Dear Rev. Father:

I have read your Catechisms with attention, and I think your plan and arrangement of lessons is excellent. The simplicity and plainness of your language will make your books easy to be learned and retained. I hope your Catechisms will meet with a large circulation.

Very faithfully yours,

THOMAS FOLEY,
Bishop Adm., Chicago.

BUFFALO, August 9, 1876.

Rev. Dear Father:

After a hurried examination of your improved edition of Catechisms, Nos. 1 and 2, I have no hesitation in subscribing to the cordial approbation which many distinguished prelates have given to them.

Respectfully yours,

S. V. RYAN,
Bishop of Buffalo.

ALLEGHANY CITY, August 23, 1876.

Rev. and Dear Father Muller:

I received your Catechisms a few weeks ago. I congratulate you for your success in such a difficult task. The style in which these Catechisms are written, the full matter which they contain, and the method which has been adopted, render them the very best, and therefore most cheerfully I recommend them to the Catholic community.

Your devoted,

✠ M. DOMENEC,
Bishop of Alleghany.

I think your Catechisms are very good.

VERY REV. NIC. MAURON,
Superior-General, C.SS.R.

I have read your Catechisms with delight. They are, in my humble opinion, the very thing we need, and are destined, when they become known, to supersede all others. For years my brain has been working over the problem you have solved. I beg, therefore, to extend to you my warmest congratulations.

I remain yours in Christ,
J. PRENDERGAST, V. G.

ST PATRICK'S CHURCH,
CHATHAM VILLAGE, N. Y. STATE.

Rev. and Dear Father:

I have since received the copies you so kindly sent me of your improved series of Catechisms.

The one for beginners is exceedingly clear and simple, being admirably adapted for the use of our "little ones," and also for a large class of adults, whose capacity for learning must necessarily be weak, owing to a lack of previous education.

As for your Parochial Catechism, it is right worthy of the name, being, in fact, a clear, concise, and trustworthy epitome of the theological knowledge necessary for the people, and presented to them in such simple language and convenient form.

No better little book, for their primary instruction, could be placed in the hands of non-Catholics, seeking to become acquainted with the principles of the Catholic faith and Catholic practice. Wishing you many more years of service to the Church,

I remain, Rev. and dear Father,
Sincerely yours in Christ,
JAMES J. MORIARTY,
Pastor.

(From Rev. A. KÖNINGS, C.SS.R., Professor of Moral Theology and Canon Law.)

ILCHESTER, HOWARD CO., MD.,
September 12, 1874.

Rev. and Dear Father Muller:

I have most carefully read and examined your excellent manuscripts of the Catechisms. I took the liberty to make a few alterations. I do not hesitate, for a moment, to pronounce this work of yours one of the most useful for our time and country. It is written in the

true spirit of St. Alphonsus. Its theology is sound and solid, its spirit most devout, and its language simple and popular. I was particularly pleased with those chapters which treat on the Church, Papal Infallibility, Indifference to Religion, Prayer, and Grace. Your Catechisms cannot but prove most useful to those who are learning, and to those who teach the Christian doctrine. Their diligent and frequent perusal cannot fail to confirm converts in their faith, and supply Catholics with quite popular and solid arguments, to refute the fallacious objections of non-Catholics. I feel confident that both the clergy and laity will hail with delight the publication of these Catechisms, so well calculated to remedy the two great evils of our time and country: want of faith and true piety.

Congratulating you on having so successfully accomplished one of the most difficult works,

I am your devoted confrère,

A. KONINGS, C.SS.R.

"Many thanks for your excellent Catechisms. From their thoroughness and simplicity they must become popular with the clergy and laity."

REV. M. SHEEHAN.

"Having carefully examined Father Muller's Catechisms, I do not hesitate to pronounce them far superior to all other Catechisms hitherto published."

REV. M. KAEDER, O. S. B.

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"I feel very thankful to you for your Catechisms. I shall introduce them immediately. It seems to me that by the use of your series, children will have less trouble to learn, and the pastor less trouble to explain, the truths of our holy religion.

"Accept my thanks, Rev. Father, and the wish that your books may be speedily introduced in all parochial schools in which English is spoken."

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REV. P. HIDENREICH, C. SS. R.

"Your Catechisms have, at last, been received by us, and read by every one in the community, with unfeigned delight and gratitude. You have done a noble and necessary work. You have succeeded far beyond the expectations of your most sanguine friends and well-wishers.

"The main reasons for which we all esteem and prefer your late books of instruction to all others in our language, are the following: You are a thorough-going Catholic and Papist, and readily infect your readers with your orthodox enthusiasm. Your style is eminently plain, popular, and transparent, always delights, and never wearies either the theologian or the hod-carrier. Your views are at once broad, profound, and sublime, and yet comprehensible to the dullest mind. Your proofs and illustrations are convincing, comprehensive, always to the point, and never evince the least effort or display. Dryness, the insufferable bore of most religious or learned works,

seems entirely unknown to you. Nowadays, this enviable and rare quality of interesting the reader or hearer, has become the most essential and indispensable of all. Without it our spoilt, novel-reading public will avoid ascetical books, as they do the small-pox. As to your selection of matter, a most difficult task, you have been most successful. Knowing the practical wants of our age and people, you have hit the golden medium, and have happily blended the doctrinal with the moral, the speculative with the practical. You teach people agreeably how to go about a thing ; for instance, how to make confession, hear Mass, avoid occasions of sin, prepare for dying, etc. Your treatise on the Pope and the Blessed Eucharist, and your easy method of praying at Mass, are beyond all praise.

"Besides, the print is large, thick, and easily legible ; the form reasonably small, handy, and portable ; the whole appearance neat and attractive—all high recommendations among an æsthetic or utilitarian people. Were it in my power, I would assuredly procure thousands of copies, and distribute them broadcast over the entire land ; nor would I rest till your big Catechism, at least Familiar Explanation of Christian Doctrine, came into every household, and was thumbed by every hand—Catholic, Protestant or infidel. No one could help reading it, I am sure. For more than three hundred years, the so-called 'Reformers' have most ardently and industriously endeavored to publish, not only voluminous works, but also to compose countless smaller works, which, veiling their errors under the cloak of piety, have deceived, with incredible facility, the ignorant, the simple, and the incautious.

"Your big Catechism is eminently calculated to meet the mischievous activity of such men, and to rear the edifice of Christian knowledge on its own secure and solid basis—the instruction of its authorized teachers; to afford the faithful a fixed standard of Christian belief, and to the pastors a practical form of religious instruction ; to supply a pure and ever-flowing fountain of living waters ; to refresh and strengthen at once the pastor and the flock. In the pages of this Catechism you have arranged in order, expounded with perspicuity, and sustained by convincing argument, the entire economy of religion, comprehending, as it does, the whole substance of doctrinal and practical religion, and at once instructive and edifying to pastor and people. This production of yours will, therefore, decidedly prove to all a treasure of knowledge, a source of comfort, a monitor of conscience, an arsenal of defence, an antidote to neutralize the poison of false doctrines and principles, to do

away with prejudice, to remove ignorance, promote piety, and confirm belief, under all conceivable circumstances.'

REV. B. NEITHART, C.SS.R.,

From the Dubuque *Telegraph.*

"The perusal of Father Muller's Catechisms has given much gratification. There is some life in these Catechisms. They treat Christian doctrine and Christian morality in such a way as to make the learning of these important matters attractive and pleasant, instead of its being, as it is in most books, almost repulsive, or, at least, uninteresting and disagreeable.

—"There has been no lack of Catechisms on Christian Doctrine, but there has not been one of them of the character of the third one of the series which we are noticing, nor, indeed, of the second of this series. In most, if not all, of the Catechisms of Christian Doctrine in use, the answers to questions are made to cover more ground than the questions ask; and, therefore, the learner is made to know more than the interrogator or teacher. In Muller's series it is just the other way, as it ought to be.

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"To write a plain and practical Catechism is conceded by all to be a work of great difficulty; but no one who gives Father Muller's series a careful perusal can fail to admit that he has succeeded in giving an explanation of the great truths of Christian doctrine, that is at once clear and satisfactory. The plan he has adopted is a novel one. The series is admirably graded. No. 1, the Catechism for Beginners, is a marvel of simplicity and conciseness; and No. 3 will be found to be a book in which every Catholic, no matter what his age and learning may be, will delight."

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"These Catechisms are truly a 'great Godsend in these days of unbelief and corruption.' They fill a want that has long been felt, and are peculiarly adapted to the several classes to which they are addressed. In these volumes the doctrine of the Catholic Church stands before the world in all that simplicity, truthfulness, and beauty, which are rightly hers; and he must be wilfully blind who cannot see therein the marks which make her the One True Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church."

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Father Muller has written these Catechisms in a simple, clear, and comprehensive manner; the questions and answers on all points of Christian doctrine are thorough, and cannot fail to be exceedingly useful in imparting a right understanding of our holy religion."

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